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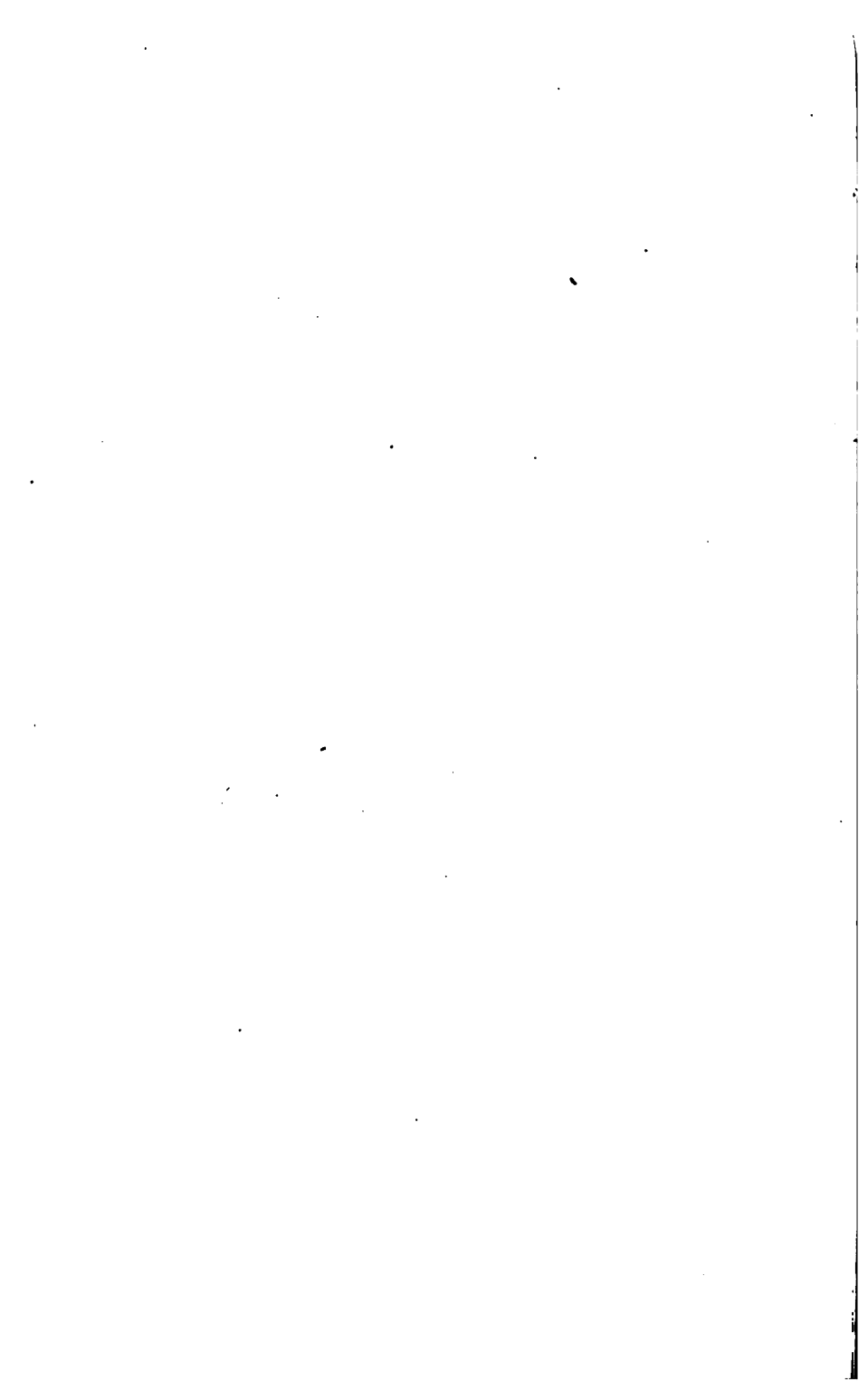
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FAIR WOMEN AT FONTAINEBLEAU.

BY

FRANK HAMEL

AUTHOR OF 'FAMOUS FRENCH SALONS'

EVELEIGH NASH

FAWSIDE HOUSE

LONDON

1909

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TO THE
MANAGER

Univ. of
California



Marie de Pompadour.
from a painting by Sir Louis in the Louvre
by permission of Baron Clement & Co. Dornach & Paris.

TO
H. H. ORR

255206



Mme de Sempadour.
from a painting by La Tour in the Louvre
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TO
H. H. ORR

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Blessed Father of Day, fair Sun, rise out of the wave, and
come with me to see the most beautiful place in the world !
It is the proud residence of the greatest of kings, Fontaine-
bleau, named "Love's Delight."

From the French of GUILLAUME COLLETET.

PREFACE

THE minuteness of a Dangeau or a De Luynes, the insight and imagination of a Bassompierre and a Saint-Simon, and as many words as are contained in their combined works would be required in setting forth a complete history of the Palace of Fontainebleau. Such a narrative would show one aspect of the life of a whole nation, and illuminate the characteristics of the French race from the earliest time to the present day. The weight of encumbering detail, however, would crush out the romance which is the very essence of the story of Fontainebleau. In writing of the fair women who dwelt in the palace, I have endeavoured to extract and preserve this romance, whilst allowing the history of Fontainebleau to shape itself in the background as it inevitably must. To understand and know these women is to understand and know something of the country and times in which they lived and died ; to see them at the palace of Fontainebleau is, for the most part, to see them at their best and happiest, in holiday mood and in holiday garb.

In my desire to make the narrative clear and

consecutive, it has now and again been necessary to introduce material which bears only indirectly on the palace, but the reason for such apparent digression is self-evident. The incidents that occurred there were the cause or the outcome of things that happened elsewhere, and precede or follow them in logical sequence. On the other hand, I have occasionally touched upon events which do not belong strictly to the lives of the women I have depicted. They are, however, essential to the underlying motive of my book, namely, to render worthily an account of a national monument, in its historical associations as entrancing and intimately personal as any I know, and at the same time to communicate to others something of the interest and pleasure I have myself experienced at Fontainebleau. My only cause for regret is that it has been impossible to extend the work to the associations and traditions of the village as well as of the palace, and of the forest as well as of the village. A few allusions of the kind have crept in, but space was wanting to amplify them; such, for instance, are the parting of Mme. de Sévigné from her daughter at the Hôtel du Lion d'Or in 1675; Marie de Mancini playing her guitar in the village inn to drown the voice of the king's messenger; Josephine living peacefully with the Marquis de Beauharnais, her father-in-law, almost at the gates of the palace, all unaware of her great destiny; Mme. de Maintenon teaching the catechism to the

peasant children in her school at Avon, or feeding the poor at her little house, "Mon Repos," in Fontainebleau village ; Anne of Austria visiting the sick in the hospital she had built ; and Mme. de Pompadour, the king and their guests, gambling at the six famous card-tables in the *salon* of the fine hotel on the road to Bourron. This building stands to-day exactly as it was then, but it is for sale and may possibly be demolished ; the Lion d'Or has changed its name, "Mon Repos" and other landmarks in the village are forgotten. But in the palace everything that could possibly be done has been done to preserve the old conditions, and the charm and memories of bygone centuries hang thickly about it. They are so real that they can hardly fail to strike the casual observer much in the manner I have indicated in the introduction to this volume. The palace itself is the stage on which the drama unfolds, and the chief parts in it are sustained by women. That it should be so detracts nothing from the entertainment.

FRANK HAMEL.

*Hôtel du Lion d'Or,
Fontainebleau, 1908.*

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INTRODUCTION

VISIONS OF FAIR WOMEN

THE beauty and significance of a royal palace are in the eye of the beholder. The architect regards the edifice from the standpoint of technical construction ; the artist appreciates its form and colouring with a view to reproduction on canvas ; the historian thinks first of those who have dwelt within its walls ; the poet peoples it with romantic or fantastic images of his own weaving ; the fine lady endeavours to picture to herself the social life, the crowded entertainments, the gay robes and brilliant jewels of those who have vanished from the scene. Many such points of view occur to those who would reconstruct the story of a palace like Fontainebleau, and to represent it more especially as the home of the fair women who graced its galleries and stairways, courts, terraces and gardens, is to complicate the plain narrative of incident and action with a bewildering element of passion, fear, ambition, joy, jealousy, despair and the kindred emotions which flow and ebb with the beat of a woman's pulse. Fontainebleau is especially rich in a store of feminine experiences, for

in the main its history deals with the softer aspects of life. There was more love there than war, more play than work, more ease than hardship, more luxury than labour. Light and shade mingle in the happenings as they must mingle in all human affairs. Women rejoiced there at the proudest moments of their career ; women suffered there untold misery, degradation, even disgrace ; they loved there devotedly, hated implacably, quarrelled and revenged themselves, smiled and spoke gaily, but to weep bitter tears in secret ; scorned and despised inwardly the men they cajoled and flattered openly, danced while the heart was breaking, supped in silence while they gloated over a new triumph or contemplated heights of glory still to scale.

They pass in review in a long procession, these women ; many of them beautiful, many clever, almost all interesting, most of them lovable and loving, a few cold and unimpressive. Every type of feminine character is represented : the stately and the dignified, the haughty, vain and unapproachable, the gay and pleasure-seeking, the pious and studious, the ambitious and grasping, the modest and retiring. Of every appearance, dark-haired and blonde, blue-eyed and brown, tall, slender, short or thickset, of many nationalities, they are in the main of noble rank and high connections, queens and princesses, duchesses and marchionesses, courtesans and favourites. Wives

and mothers are amongst them, young maidens and elderly spinsters. They press on, they jostle one another, they die and their places are filled, they bloom into beauty or fade into insignificance; mothers give birth to children who usurp their power, sisters trample one upon the other in their efforts to be first in the glorious race to wealth and fame. Some appear on the scene for one bright hour and are gone, others visit and re-visit it until they seem to belong to the palace for always. They crowd into the gaily lighted *salons*, and stray solitary or in couples in the darkening forest glades; they ride madly in the wild chase, or sit dreaming beside some plashing fountain; they strut, proud as peacocks and as gaudily bedizened, on the terraces, or dip in the still forest pools clothed in simple cotton gowns. Differences disappear in one purpose common to them all. Like planets obeying the sun in its course, they circle without exception round him who is first in the land. France's loveliest daughters by birth, by marriage or adoption, serve their king and their country. At times in the story the king is a helpless, prattling infant, whose steps are under women's guidance, at times a dotard expending his failing wits in exchange for women's wiles, or again, a man in the heyday of youth and full of pride in his position, his life-companion chosen from amongst the greatest ladies in Europe.

At Fontainebleau woman is always welcome.

No pressing and onerous affairs of State banish her for long together, no conditions of siege or battle make it needful for her to seek safety elsewhere, no hours of serious study or intellectual pursuits make her presence an undesired thing ; she can come and go almost as she will, the palace is her retreat, her sanctuary, her playground, her ball-room, sometimes even the whole world to her. There she reigns supreme in the particular sphere she has set spinning. There are small spheres and greater spheres. Sometimes the less are impinged upon by the greater, sometimes even absorbed by them as they whirl too near the hub of the universe and get sucked into the vortex, becoming indistinguishable as a separate entity. These spheres and their centres have much significance in the story of Fontainebleau.

It is difficult to tread anywhere in the palace and its gardens without awakening some memory of the story ; at every step association brings to mind incidents in the lives of the fair women who dwelt and moved there. Shadowy visions of beauty spring up unbidden, peopling the place with a motley crowd of beings who have stepped out of the story, casting aside limitations of time and demands of historical sequence, and who are happily regardless of the incongruity of mingling costumes and manners of different periods. Returning in company to the spot they knew and loved, they are strangers in everything but the desire to visit

it, and no greeting passes between them. Diane de Poitiers, mounted for the chase on a fiery horse she knows well how to tame, her falcon on her wrist, rides forth through the courtyard, whilst Marie-Antoinette, still a child-bride, comes jogging in on her donkey from the forest. They have no knowledge of their strange meeting. Almost upon them come the rush and stir of wheels. Carriage after carriage rolls in at the palace gates, the courtyard is alive with people, the Empress, arrived from Paris, proceeds up the grand horse-shoe staircase, followed by a throng of ladies and servants who move swiftly and vanish silently away.

In the gardens there is the same illusion of people stepping out of the story. Beyond a clump of chestnut-trees Mme. de Châteaubriand is seated by her royal lover, François I ; at the turn of the avenue Henriette d'Orléans drives by in a *calèche* with her maids of honour, the sunlight flashing on the jewels in their plumed hats ; in the dim evening light the self-same lady, seated in a gondola beside her fascinated brother-in-law, Louis XIV, floats idly on the canal to the sound of sweet music. On the balcony above the Porte Dorée Mme. de Maintenon sits impatiently awaiting the king's expected visit. She is longing to be away to her poor at Avon. The figure fleeing through the golden portals beneath her is the Duchesse d'Etampes, her day now over. In the Galerie de

Diane Anne of Austria is feasting Cardinal Barberini, the table laden with good fare. The room is the same, but presently the character of the scene has changed. Helena of Mecklenburg is dining *en famille* the evening before her wedding.

The story grows so real that it becomes difficult not to grieve with La Grande Mademoiselle as she bursts into tears because two Knights of the Order of the Holy Ghost are degraded for having followed her father, Gaston d'Orléans, or to rejoice with Mme. de Pompadour triumphing upon the stage in her little theatre, or to mourn with Josephine, pacing her apartments half distraught because divorce is near. Another forsaken lady, the most beautiful and imperious of all, sits in her room clenching her hands and biting her lip in anger ; it is Mme. de Montespan deciding that the time has come to leave the Court, for the king visits her no longer.

In the Chapelle de la Sainte-Trinité four brides stand at the altar, of distinctive identity yet oddly seen together ; they are Marie Leczinska, robed in violet velvet and wearing a crown of diamonds, who is to become the wife of Louis XV and mother of ten children ; Marie-Louise d'Orléans, niece of Louis XIV, woe-begone because her uncle is forcing her to marry the crowned imbecile Charles II of Spain ; Catherine of Wurtemberg, united to Jérôme Bonaparte amidst a whirl of festivity ; and lastly, Helena of Mecklenburg, whose

marriage bells form a fitting close to the romance of Fontainebleau.

In the queen's bed-chamber are many royal ladies. Marie de Médicis, Marie-Thérèse, Marie-Antoinette, Marie-Louise, wife of Napoleon, and Marie-Amélie of Louis-Philippe, have entitled it to be called the "Chambre des cinq Maries." In the *salon de jeu* near by Marie-Antoinette gambles the night through, whilst in the ante-chamber her ladies-in-waiting sneer and smile, but cannot speak of what they know, and the air thrills with coming terror.

A solitary and sinister figure patrols the lengthy Galerie des Cerfs, leaning on a stick, gazing first right, then left, with steely eyes, as though seeking something hidden. It is Christina of Sweden, unable to rest. She pauses at length before a coat of mail, all that remains of her victim, Monaldeschi, the stain of whose blood has disappeared. In the gallery overhead, the quaint German lady, Princess Palatine, successor of the fair Henriette as wife to the little Monsieur, walks also, but with a different purpose; she longs to see the ghost of François I, and is indignant because it remains invisible.

In the Salle Ovale, now Salle de Louis XIII, Mme. Boursier, the *sage-femme*, conceals the sex of little Louis from his agitated father, Henri IV, and his mother, Marie de Médicis, faints with joy when she knows she has given birth to an heir.

On the walls of the apartment her monogram is oddly mingled with that of her rival, la Charmante Gabrielle.

The Salle de Bal, otherwise Galerie de Henri II, is full to overflowing. It is the most superb apartment of the palace. Diane de Poitiers is the queen of many a *fête* held there; Marie de Médicis and her sister Eléonore preside at a banquet given after the baptism of the three children of France. The Maréchal de Bassompierre, in his coat of violet cloth of gold embroidered with seed pearls, bows over the hand of the fair young Charlotte de Montmorency, soon to be Princesse de Condé fleeing from the unwelcome attentions of Henri IV. Unconsciously mingling with them is the crowd of distinguished people present at the civil marriage of Helena of Mecklenburg.

On the walls of the Galerie de François I the Salamander burns on in undying flames. There hung a painting which represented Diane de Poitiers as Nymph of Fontainebleau. Before it Mme. d'Etampes was standing, dumb with anger at the artist's insolence. Primaticcio was ordered to undo the work of his rival Rosso and to paint her ladyship instead as Danae visited by Jupiter. She stands in front of the new painting, her anger hidden now under a smile of triumph. In fostering the ever-growing jealousy of the artists, it was she that brought about Cellini's downfall.

Anne of Austria and her women have vanished

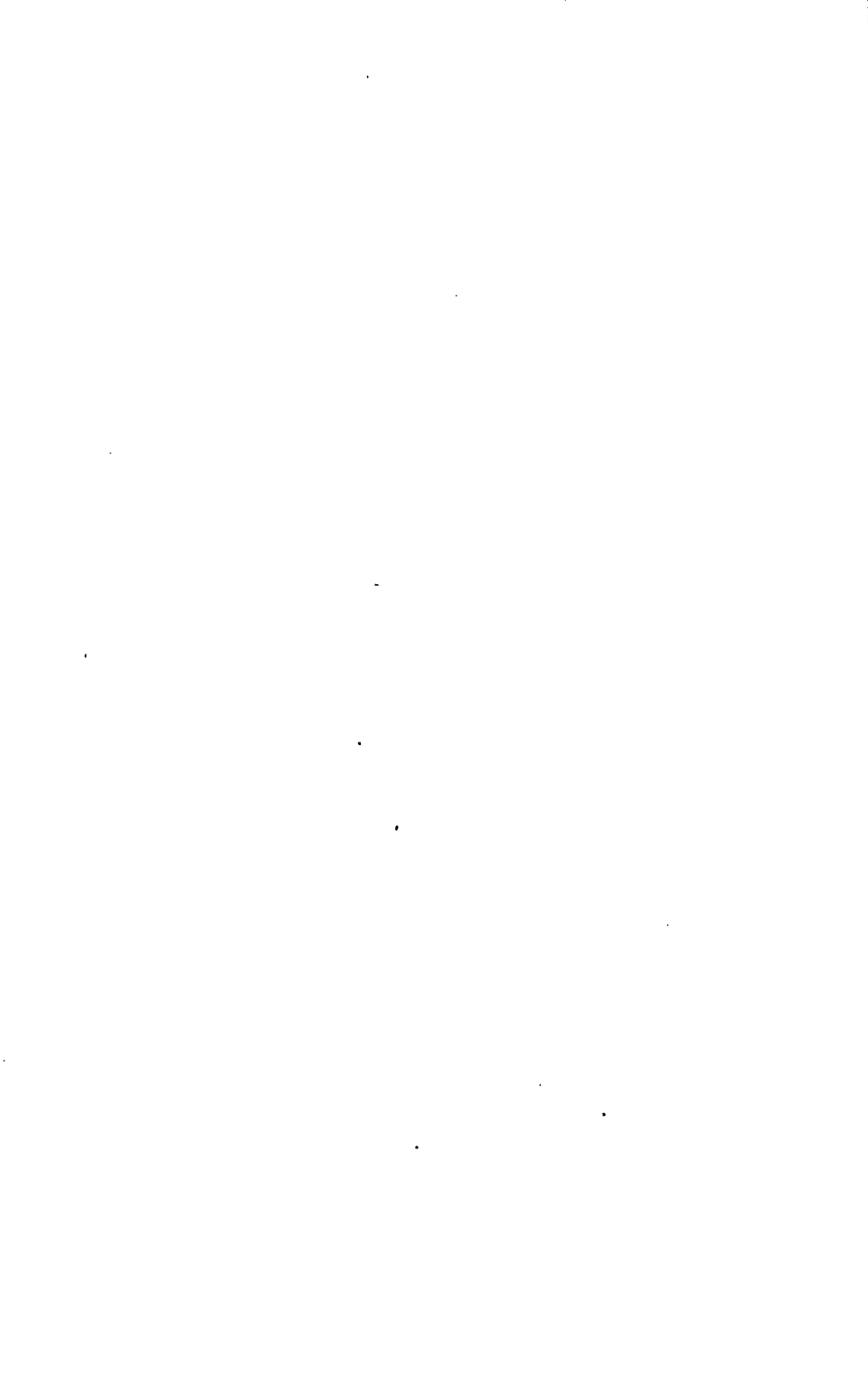
from the Appartements des Reines-Mères to make room for the imprisoned Pius VII and his cardinals. The vision of her kindly face is replaced by that of his austere one, which wears a mingled look of piety, weariness and physical weakness, and brings to mind Napoleon and the daring methods by which he worked his autocratic will. Napoleon's striking figure, too, dominates the Cour des Adieux. No recollection of ironic epithets, *Commediante*, *Tragediante*, can belittle for a moment the impressive farewell to his guards. That part of the story is seen so clearly that the stalking form of Catherine de Médicis passes by almost unnoticed. She is slowly moving round a shadowy equestrian statue of Marcus Aurelius, upon which she bestows admiring glances, for she placed it there in the full flush of her power, and from it the courtyard took its former name of the Cour du Cheval Blanc.

In the dusk Mme. de Mailly, sad and foreboding, crosses the Jardin de Diane on the pretext of visiting the rooms of Mme. de Vintimille. She shudders as she walks, for she believes the king is about to forsake her for her younger sister. The exiled English queen, Henrietta Maria, gazes sadly from the windows of her room in the Cour de la Fontaine, trying to realize her grievous position. Marie-Louise is passing through the Jardin Anglais, under the pine-trees planted for her by Napoleon. Now she nears the fountain Bleaud,

mysterious origin of the name of the palace. Her horizon is at present unclouded, and discloses only happiness. She is walking towards the pavilion built in the centre of the lake, where her Imperial husband will join her to partake of coffee. Marie Leczinska is standing in the parterre. It is her wedding-night, and fireworks illumine the flower-beds and fountains, while bonfires throw flickering lights and shadows on the grand canal and the trees which line its banks. In the wooded park, Catherine de Médicis visits her dairy-farm, My-Voye. The story is becoming more confused than before, the visions are dim and less frequent. In the forest Napoleon rides deep in thought. He is meditating on the subject of divorce, seeing himself father of an heir to the Empire. Near by Marie-Antoinette tends the swooning wife of a peasant gored by a stag in the chase. Round her is an admiring crowd of sympathizers. At this hour she is regarded as the pride of France.

The visions are fading out, but faint echoes take their place as though carried by a gentle breeze across the forest. "Josephine, dear Josephine, I have loved you, but my affections must yield before the interests of France." No need to ask whose voice declaims those words. "But what is her position at Court? To amuse the king? Then I shall be her rival." The speech is followed by a subdued titter of laughter. The unsophisticated Marie-Antoinette has questioned a noble

concerning Mme. du Barry. A long-drawn groan, the one word "Dieu," and Monaldeschi's tortured body recoils, turns over and lies at rest. The sound of grievous sobbing is heard. Gabrielle, torn from her lover's arms, is bidding him farewell for the last time. She will never see the palace again. "Qu'en pense votre Solidité?" inquires Louis XIV gravely, as he waits for Mme. de Maintenon's answer to a momentous question. The audacious Voltaire is whispering in the ear of his mistress as she sits at the card-table, "You are playing with cheats." "Adieu, mes enfants, adieu." The last sad words of the Emperor to his soldiers are but a dying sigh in the wind. Then all is silence and there are no more visions. The disjointed fragments have disappeared to make room for the ordered story of the past.



WOMEN OF THE MIDDLE AGES

CHAPTER I

WOMEN OF THE MIDDLE AGES

"A FOREST so prodigiously encompassed with hideous rocks of whitish hard stone, heaped one on another in mountainous heights, that I think the like is nowhere to be found more horrid and solitary," wrote Evelyn, the diarist, in the seventeenth century of the wild district which six hundred years before first became part of the royal domain of France, and was known as the Forest of Bière. Robert le Pieux, son of Hugues Capet, who reigned from 996 to 1031 A.D., was often at Melun, and built a chapel and small hunting-box on the site of the Palace of Fontainebleau. Robert married Berthe, widow of the Comte de Blois, whom he repudiated in 1006 in order to wed Constance of Aquitaine, a lady of whom it was said, "she never jokes." Whether either or both of these women visited the scene of the future palace it would be idle to conjecture. Robert was succeeded by his son Henri I, who married Anne, daughter of the Grand Duke of Russia. Their son was Philippe I, who acquired the fief of Bière and united it to the French crown. He died at Melun in 1108, and was succeeded by

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Louis VI. To the reign of Louis VII, called Louis le Jeune, belongs the honour of dispelling the mists of antiquity which conceal the origin of the Palace of Fontainebleau. He issued an act with the inscription, "Actum publice apud Fontem Bleaudi A.D. 1137 in palacio nostro." Whether Bleaud was the name of a man to whom the fountain belonged, or of a dog who discovered it, or whether "belle-eau" was elided to form "bleau" is equally uncertain and practically immaterial. The stronghold, consisting of a donjon, flanked by towers and surrounded by walls and a moat, was certainly called Fontainebleau in the reign of Louis VII, who founded the Abbaye de Barbeau near it, and also built the Chapelle de Saint-Saturnin, which was consecrated by no less a person than Thomas à Becket. It is not at all improbable that the king's intractable wife Eléonore visited the palace. She was a very haughty woman, and declared that she had married a monk rather than a man. Eléonore and Louis were divorced, and there were very disturbing scenes, which—since history is known to repeat itself—may have taken place at Fontainebleau. The next king was Philippe-Auguste, who ascended the throne in 1180 and married Isabella of Hainault, and after her death Ingelburge or Angelburge, daughter of the King of Denmark. This marriage was annulled almost immediately, and Philippe espoused in her place the beautiful and interesting Agnès de Méranie,

daughter of the Count of Istria. The king loved his third wife passionately, and she often accompanied him to the chase, a pursuit to which he was devoted. She was queen of the tournaments, and knights were overjoyed to receive their laurels from her fair hands. The troubadours sang of her extraordinary beauty. She presided at *fêtes* given at the palace on the king's return from the Crusades about Christmas 1191, when there were great rejoicings. But, alas for this unfortunate lady. No sooner was the cup of her happiness full than Pope Innocent III proclaimed the king's divorce illegal, and placed France under sentence of interdict until Philippe, yielding to the inevitable, was constrained to take back the Princess Ingelburge, and Agnès, separated from her lover, was left to die a broken-hearted woman.

In 1197 Philippe-Auguste signed a charter conveying the hermitage of Franchard to the monastery of Saint-Euverte of Orleans. In this lonely cave, "built on the summit of one of these gloomy precipices, intermingled with trees and shrubs, the stones hanging over and menacing ruin," ¹ a succession of hermits lived a life of devotion which ended not infrequently in assassination. There Philippe went to pray for good fortune in war. His son Louis, having been wounded in a tournament held in celebration of his forthcoming

¹ Evelyn's Diary.

marriage to Blanche de Castille, was besought by Philippe to forswear such dangerous pastimes. In due course he was married to the remarkable woman who passionately loved the forest, and founded the Abbey of Lis not far from the palace. She frequently resided at the Château de Grez, on the road to Nemours. An oak-tree in the forest of Fontainebleau was called by her name, and beneath its shade Châteaubriand was inspired to write verses at the age of fifteen.

After the death of Louis le Lion, Blanche de Castille acted as regent to her son Louis IX, known as Saint-Louis, who called the forest "Mes chers déserts," and loved nothing better than the chase. He made long stays at the palace, and a pavilion built by him bore his name. A spiral staircase led to his study, where he kept many of the curiosities he had collected. These apartments were reconstructed in the time of François I. Saint-Louis founded a hospital and built a hermitage. In 1234 he married Marguerite de Provence, who accompanied him to the palace. It was said that he rarely saw her except at stated hours, and then always in the presence of his mother. Blanche de Castille's influence remained predominant throughout her lifetime. Marguerite undoubtedly suffered a good deal at the hands of the queen-mother, who, brilliant and cultured as she was, was nevertheless exacting and jealous of her son's wife. Of the marriage, five sons and four daughters were born.

In 1259 Saint-Louis lay dangerously ill at Fontainebleau, and calling to him his heir, Louis, said, "My son, I beg of you to make yourself beloved by the people of your kingdom. For, verily, I would rather see a Scot come from Scotland, or any other foreigner who would govern the realm well and loyally, than that you should govern it unwisely and bring it into bad repute. The king recovered, but the son died before his father, and Philippe III succeeded to the throne. Whilst heir-apparent a son was born to him by his wife Isabella of Aragon, at Fontainebleau in 1268. Isabella created a precedent which was largely followed in after years. She found the palace an eminently suitable place in which to await her confinement, and many later queens profited by this example. Her son became Philippe IV, better known as Philippe le Bel, and was the first king to be called King of France and of Navarre. Three sons reigned after him, all of whom were born in the palace, and were said to be very good-looking. Their mother, "la bonne reine Jeanne" of Navarre, was a devout and respected princess. Philippe was devoted to the chase, and one day was thrown from his horse and carried dying into the palace. The bed in which he had been born served also as his bier.

Louis X, known as Louis Hutin, who was one of the three princes born at Fontainebleau, married Marguerite de Bourgogne, and his brother, Philippe V, married Jeanne de Bourgogne, daughter of the

Count Palatine, but neither of these queens play any part in the story of Fontainebleau. Charles IV, surnamed le Bel, was visited there by his sister Isabella, consort of Edward II of England. She wrote indignant complaints of her husband to the French king, who had not long been on the throne, and speedily followed her letter in person. She sailed for France in May 1325, escorted by Lord John Cromwell and four knights. At first Charles welcomed her with kindness, but when he received a letter from his brother-in-law, asking him to chastise her for her misconduct, and make her demean herself as she ought for the honour of those to whom she belonged, the French king began to fear that his sister's presence might trouble the peace which existed between the two countries at that time, and begged Isabella to return to England, which she finally agreed to do, taking her departure on the 25th of September, 1326. Two years later Charles le Bel died, and with him the direct line of the house of Capet came to an end. Salic law being in force, his cousin Philippe de Valois succeeded to the throne. Philippe was a soldier, tall and handsome, of particular attractiveness and courtly grace. He married Jeanne, third daughter of the Duc de Bourgogne. She was pious, talented, possessed a strong character, and was very fond of intellectual pursuits. She exercised much influence over her husband, and very probably accompanied him in 1347, when the king was at

Fontainebleau. His successor, Jean le Bon, visited the palace, and, according to some accounts, he was there with his wife and children in 1350, when there was an outbreak of plague in Paris.

Charles V, whose wife was Jeanne de Bourbon, founded a library at Fontainebleau about 1364, and appointed Nicolas Brême librarian. This king was a passionate lover of books, and had artistic and luxurious tastes. Some famous manuscripts, works of Aristotle, Saint-Augustine and Plutarch, were said to be stored in the palace by him.

From thence onward the story becomes obscure until François I came upon the scene. The country was passing through troublous times. The towns were fortified, the castles were strongholds, war was prolonged, and poverty and suffering on the increase. In long winter evenings rude soldiers gathered round the blazing fires in the great halls of the castles, and played dice or told stories of chivalry, and thought of tournaments to come. But the first interest was battle, and the conquest of the English. Touraine, Amboise, Blois were favoured by the kings as residences. In the reign of Charles VI, however, Fontainebleau was not quite neglected. Isabeau de Bavière, when a girl of fifteen, journeyed from Germany to be his bride. She loved Fontainebleau, and repaired part of the palace from her own designs. The Court was corrupt, and she indulged to the full her taste for luxury and pleasure. She stayed at

the palace, devising every form of amusement, with her two daughters, Jeanne and Marie. The Duc d'Orléans was her lover, and balls and dinners were arranged for the young nobles who accompanied the Court, whilst hunting and driving in the forest formed a daily pastime. Charles VI was mad, and in his madness he forgot his wife, his children and his kingdom. He only remembered Odette, the common daughter of a horse-dealer, who, happily placed beside him, afterwards refused to depart. He was a pathetic figure, passionate and crazy, with a gentle mistress to tend him, whilst his wife carried on orgies in the palace and the English made war at Melun.

Charles VII preferred the Château de Loches to Fontainebleau, and it was there that the beautiful Agnès Sorel stayed. She hunted and feasted with him, played cards and danced ballets. But he left her when the time came to follow Jeanne d'Arc, who had no connection with the palace. Louis XI, surnamed le Politique, built a new library at Fontainebleau in 1474. Charles VIII and Louis XII showed little interest in the place. The need for strongholds was dying out, Fontainebleau was no longer a fortress, it was a manor, a hunting-box falling into decay. It remained lying idle, half-ruined, awaiting the artistic touch which should once and for all establish its fame, awaiting, too, the returning ring of women's words and laughter which should give to it an abiding charm.

THE DUCHESSE D'ETAMPES
(QUEEN OF FÊTES)

CHAPTER II

THE DUCHESSE D'ETAMPES

(QUEEN OF FÊTES)

THE dilapidated donjon which had nestled for centuries in the heart of verdant woods received one day the visit of a wizard-prince, and thereafter became transformed into a gorgeous pleasure-palace. The wizard-prince, known to a prosaic world under the title of King François I, happened to be hunting in the neighbourhood, or perhaps was journeying with his Court from one city to another, when he passed through Fontainebleau and realized its wonderful possibilities. François I had a keen eye for beauty and a good-will to produce it. He rarely missed an opportunity of spending money on adornment. Therefore he began, almost immediately, to weave spells over the ruined château, to rebuild the donjon, towers and battlements, and by the aid of such magicians as Leonardo da Vinci, Andrea del Sarto, Rosso, Primaticcio, and Benvenuto Cellini, to conjure up magnificent ornament, rich colouring, decorative design, and beautiful workmanship, hitherto undreamed of in the philosophy of France. The outlines of the old

des Adieux. The Cour Ovale, formerly Cour du Donjon, was overlooked by the apartments of Louise de Savoie, by those of the king and queen, and of Madame d'Etampes. Among the more important additions to the château made by François I were the Galerie d'Ulysse ; the Galerie de François I, which was decorated by Rosso and Primaticcio with the Salamander and the king's initial worked into the design ; the Galerie de Henri II, or Salle des Fêtes, at one time the Salle de Bal, which was painted by Primaticcio between 1551 and 1556, by the order of Henri II, in honour of Diane de Poitiers, with their joint monogram, the famous D.H., and the crescent repeated in the ornament ; the Pavillons de Pomone, de l'Etang and des Poêles, the latter so called on account of the German stoves it contained ; the famous Grotte du Jardin des Pins and the Jardin de Buis, afterwards Jardin de l'Orangerie, and finally renamed, in 1789, Jardin de Diane. A league and a quarter from the palace, on the banks of the Seine, the king ordered the construction of royal wine-presses. According to tradition, one day when he was hunting a stag, the quarry crossed the river, pursued by the huntsmen. Overcome by an unconquerable thirst, François sent to a neighbouring cottage for wine, and finding it delicious to the palate, he there and then purchased a tract of land at the exact spot, planted it with vines, and built presses and cellars to deal with the grapes.

Thus Fontainebleau was moulded under this monarch's transforming touch into a palace of beauty and romance. Its name is associated with a particular style of painting and ornament, and belongs to a school of artists almost as distinctive as that of Florence or of Venice. Fontainebleau, in the time of François I, stands for the more joyous and brilliant aspect of a reign which reflected the romantic tastes of the era of Charlemagne rather than the severe and sombre rule of Louis XII. The young king, impetuous and courageous, equally intrepid in battle or at the joust, lofty of stature, handsome of visage, with a keen eye and a sure hand, the creator of a new political and intellectual era, with a passion for literature and the arts, jovial, *spirituel*, and easily moved to mirth, is in his natural element at Fontainebleau. The darker side of his career is lost to sight there, as well as his false steps, his weakness, want of moral courage, wavering honesty, or the shadow of the Spanish prison. His lack of sagacity, of diplomacy, the indolence and want of tact which characterize many of his actions in affairs of State, fade into oblivion, and give place to the picture of a gay and happy monarch, revelling in the possessions he loved, surrounded by a bevy of beautiful women, and throwing himself with the abandonment of vigorous manhood into the daily round of athletic pursuits which constituted a large part of life at Fontainebleau. Here was a soil well suited to

foster the seeds of chivalry and gallantry which were springing up at this period and bringing forth a new spirit of heroism and adventure. The literature of the day abounded in it, the habits and customs of society were moulded upon it, the wave of artistic thought spreading from Italy swelled it. Not the least sign of this new influence was the changing destiny of women, who acquired more power, a stronger position, better fortunes than before, and naturally abused these privileges royally when they gained them. The hero of the day followed in the footsteps of Amadis de Gaul, the noble type of courage, disinterestedness and loyalty conceived by Vasco de Lobeira. For the heroine the ideal existed in Diana, huntress, fearless, untiring, and a goddess. The recreations of the pleasure-palace, in which the women took a fair share, called for strenuous energy. The cities were too narrow and crowded for scenes of chivalry, the castles were too much enclosed; fields and forests formed the happiest playground. Outdoor sports and bodily exercise of every kind occupied the time between outbreaks of war. As an alternative to hunting there were tournaments; when the love for the joust was satiated, there was shooting with the cross-bow. Fontainebleau possessed every natural advantage for country pursuits, and was well named the hunters' paradise. In the impenetrable thickets and gloomy hollows of the forest, game lived in fierce profusion. The chase

was not the harmless pastime it grew to be a couple of centuries later. Wild boars and wolves were denizens of the same haunts as the stag, and the horses of the hunters were now and again brought face to face with these dangerous wild beasts. Daring women riders, eager to participate in the fray, and to emulate one another in winning the palm for bravery as well as beauty, were often subjected to bodily peril.

Nor did the tournaments offer more security to the life and limb of those who took part in them. They had not as yet degenerated into mere spectacles and shows ; the armour was real armour, the lances and swords true and sharp, the combat was a genuine and heated struggle for supremacy. Weapons were freely shivered, men were frequently unhorsed, and not infrequently wounded to the death. It was an age of activity, of prowess and hardihood, and the women vied with their sterner companions in trials of skill, strength and endurance, whenever they had the chance to do so. They were never far behind in the chase and other forms of outdoor recreation which held the attention of the Court. They owed their new freedom to the king. He loved to gather round him a number of high-born beauties, "like goddesses in heaven," as Brantôme called them, and once having established a "petite bande" he could refuse them nothing they desired. "A Court without ladies is a year without spring and a spring without roses,"

declared this monarch, who revelled in the joyousness of life and in beauties of form, of colouring and budding charms. The presence of women was an innovation, however. "King François, coming to reign," wrote Brantôme, "considering that ladies were an ornament to the Court, wished to fill it with them, contrary to old customs."

And fill it indeed he did—not always to the advantage of himself and those about him. From the day of his birth to the day of his death, François I was ruled by petticoat government. First there was his mother, the imperious Louise de Savoie, then his too loving sister, Marguerite, Queen of Navarre, who devoted herself entirely to his affairs, and neglected her own; later his mistresses reigned, and no one possessed more power than one of them, the beautiful Anne de Pisseleu, Duchesse d'Etampes, whose every wish became his law. Only his queens, firstly poor retiring Claude, and afterwards the devout Eléonore, were obliged to keep their fingers out of the Court-pie for fear of getting them burnt.

In short, François I delivered his personal peace and the peace of his household into the keeping of others in a manner which would have been reckless had he known how to arbitrate between womenfolk, but which, because he was ever at the mercy of the first fascinating face or trim ankle, involved absolute destruction to harmony and order at Court.

The two women who exerted the greatest influence over the king's personal affairs were the Comtesse de Châteaubriand and her successor, the Duchesse d'Etampes ; the two who did their best to keep discord and faction alive were Diane de Poitiers and Catherine de Médicis. In justice to the latter, it must be owned that her behaviour under trying circumstances was exemplary. She bestowed her smile upon all in turn, and waited for the day when she might assert herself with effect. In the meantime she was careful to keep on the right side of her royal father-in-law, and therefore did nothing to offend his mistress. Queen Eléonore alone remained oblivious of the war between women. She studied religious works in the quiet of her apartments, and was neither a solace nor a menace to any one, although the fact that she was sister to Charles V linked her to the dreaded Spanish influence against which the French king struggled all his life.

It was not until some years after the imprisonment of François I at Madrid that the rivalry between the ladies of the Court became ungovernable. Madame de Châteaubriand was no longer in favour. She reigned in the first half of the twenties, and it was in the later thirties and early forties that the hostilities between the king's mistress, the Duchesse d'Etampes, and the dauphin's mistress, Diane de Poitiers, were at their height.

Nowhere were the feminine influences of the

reign of greater significance than at Fontainebleau, for, in the absence of serious affairs of State, they naturally assumed an aspect of extreme importance.

It has been wisely remarked that a king's love rarely gives happiness to his mistress, but it is almost equally true that a king's mistress frequently contributes to her lover's unhappiness. The case of Madame de Châteaubriand is an example of the first class, that of Madame d'Etampes belongs to the second. The cause of this is not far to seek. Madame de Châteaubriand loved François I with a genuine affection. Madame d'Etampes loved only herself—and two or three friends, when she felt that way inclined, and the king was occupied with other considerations.

The story of Françoise de Foix, Comtesse de Châteaubriand, is a romance in itself. She was enticed from the calm joys of the country, from her home and her friends, by a trick. Born in 1495, of illustrious family, she was married at the age of twelve, and passed many happy years with her husband at their country manor. The fame of her beauty spread abroad and reached the ears of the king, which was not altogether surprising, because Françoise had three brothers at Court. At this time François I was searching the provinces for pretty women whom he wished to enroll in his "petite bande," the galaxy of loveliness which was his boast. He immediately commanded the Comte de Châteaubriand to bring

his wife to Paris. Now the comte was passionately in love with his comtesse, and, moreover, did not minimize the dangers of Court life to an unsophisticated, happy-natured young woman. He therefore feared to obey the king's orders, but could not entirely ignore them. He hit upon the expedient of informing his wife that whilst it was imperative that he should remain at Court during the king's pleasure, she was not to join him even though she should receive from him letters begging her to do so, unless one of them was accompanied by a particular ring which he was in the habit of wearing. For a time this plan was successful, but the fact that the comtesse did not accept the invitations to Court which she received through her husband, awakened the king's suspicions. A careless valet revealed the secret of the lady's non-appearance, stole his master's ring, and allowed it or its counterpart to be dispatched to Françoise, who, believing that she was carrying out her husband's instructions, hastened to Court. Once there, she was inexpressibly happy. Could she well have been otherwise? How compare the simplicity of her Brittany home with the delights of the beautiful palace of Fontainebleau, for instance. Very soon the king fell in love with her, and the struggle between her virtue and his will eventually ceased. She followed the promptings of her heart and became his mistress. For eight years she had no rival of note ; she ruled at

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Paris, at Saint-Germain and at Fontainebleau. There amidst leafy thickets, in the picturesque gardens, perhaps under the shade of the beautiful chestnut trees, she passed many charming hours with her royal lover, rejoicing in the spring and the sunshine, and heedless of the future. She was beautiful, and she knew how to make the most of her natural advantages. She introduced a new method of dressing the hair, wore fascinating little caps and neat-fitting costumes, and was easily first among fair women at that gorgeous exhibition of splendour, wealth and beauty, the Field of the Cloth of Gold. But she made one mistake. Her love was impassioned and stormy ; she exacted too much. It seemed to her that her position was becoming insecure, and she was no longer satisfied to pass peaceful hours in the calm glades of the pleasure-palace. The end came suddenly when François I, conquered at Pavia in 1525, was made a prisoner of Spain. She spent the long months of his absence in suffering and humiliation. She was out of favour with the queen-mother, who had always been jealous of the empire of his mistress over her son's mind, and to offend Louise de Savoie meant the endurance of additional insults. Nevertheless, the poor disheartened comtesse endeavoured to bear her trials in the hope that when the king returned she would be reinstated in her former position. It was then that her bitter cup became full to over-

flowing. The Court journeyed to Bayonne, where *fêtes* and rejoicings were held to celebrate the king's return. Among the queen's maids of honour was Anne de Pisseleu, otherwise Mlle. de Heilly, young, beautiful, and far more at home in the ways of the Court than Françoise de Châteaubriand. The king's eyes turned to her; he had none for his former mistress. "Ainsi qu'un clou chasse l'autre," as Brantôme described the manner of it, Mlle. de Heilly usurped the position still coveted by Mme. de Châteaubriand.

The new arrangement did not run smoothly to begin with. Anne de Pisseleu, or Mlle. de Heilly, as she was indiscriminately called before she became Duchesse d'Etampes, was not content to accept cast-off shoes without a struggle to remove every trace of a former wearer. The king had given Françoise a number of jewels made of solid gold, and engraved with mottoes and love-words. There was then a craze amongst smart people for mottoes and catchwords of all kinds. Everybody who was anybody had a monogram and an emblem designed by an artist, and an anagram or a motto composed by a poet. Nobles and princes went so far as to have a special oath and a war-cry. This fashion had been introduced from Italy into France. The king was provided with a whole set of these fanciful compositions. His emblem was the famous Salamander. The creature living in the midst of flames seemed

rightly chosen, for it somehow typifies him. The accompanying motto was "Nutrisco et extinguo" (I nourish and extinguish). His anagram was made by the poet of the day, Marot, merely by the slight change of *V* into *U*, which makes it possible to convert "François de Valois" into "De façon suis royal." His oath was "Foi de gentilhomme." There is a quaint little doggerel extant which introduces the oaths of himself and his predecessors in order of their succession; namely Louis XI, Charles VIII, Louis XII and François I. The oaths are in italics—

*"Quand la Pâque Dieu décéda,
 Par le jour Dieu lui succéda,
 Le Diable m'emporte s'en tint près,
 Foi de gentilhomme vint après."*

Emblems and mottoes in those days were to be taken seriously and possessed deep significance; and the sentimental words which, according to Brantôme, Mme. de Châteaubriand uttered about those the king had had engraved for her in gold, were warranted by the gravity of the occasion. She regarded these jewels as her dearest possessions. Mlle. de Heilly, however, demanded the tokens to be returned to her. The king sent for them, and his messenger was refused admission. He was told that he might call again in three days' time. During this interval the jewels were dispatched to a goldsmith and melted. Simple ingots were given to the messenger.

"Go," she said, "carry them to the king, and tell him that since it has pleased him to take away what he gave so generously, I render him his present in ingots. With regard to the mottoes, these are indelibly imprinted on my heart, and I hold them too sacred to suffer another than myself to appropriate or find pleasure in them."

For the first time in the transaction the king was moved to kindness. "Send them all back to her," he commanded. "That which I did was not done for the value of the jewels (for I would willingly bestow double the quantity), but on account of the mottoes and devices upon them; and since she has caused these to be removed, I do not wish for the gold, she may keep it; she has shown more of generosity and courage than I should have expected from any woman."

There is the despair of a Mlle. de la Vallière in Mme. de Châteaubriand's action. Indeed, the sad stories of these two women have much in common. Both were remarkably free from ambition and sordid considerations. They sought their only happiness in love. Denied even this, they effaced themselves and died in retirement. Mme. de Châteaubriand withdrew into the solitude of her home, and although tradition gives a sensational end to her story, the probability is that it was only a sad one. It was said that her husband kept her locked up in a dark room hung with black, and after six months of solitary imprisonment he

introduced six masked men and two surgeons into the room, and caused her to be bled to death. Then he himself went into exile to escape the just vengeance of the house of Foix.

The fate of Françoise de Châteaubriand needs no such touch of melodrama to increase its interest. It is enough that she was an unhappy woman and a beautiful one, and that life was prematurely extinguished.

Once removed from Court, the comtesse left a clear field to her rival, who was presently to become Duchesse d'Etampes. These two women form a strong contrast to one another. The first was sad and passionate, possessed of a majestic beauty, single-hearted, anxious to please, content with but little, handicapped by a jealous husband, predestined to be unfortunate, her life made up of sombre hues. The second, on the other hand, though situated in almost identical circumstances, wove a gay-coloured web from the threads at her command. She was invariably bright and merry, untroubled by excess of feeling, fascinatingly beautiful with a delicacy and daintiness of appearance that was unusual, rosy and white, and fair and flowerlike, the very person to satisfy the fastidious and artistic tastes of François I. She was not troubled by scruples, knew her own value, chose to please no one but herself—pleasing the king was incidental, of course—and was blessed with the most complaisant husband in the world: he

was chosen especially with a view to this quality. She was animated and witty, alert and even-tempered (unless her will was crossed, which never occurred for long), and she obtained as much self-satisfaction from her anomalous position as might be expected of a woman who knows she has nothing to lose and everything in the world to gain. At the same time she was far too clever to be only a pretty plaything. She took a genuine and intelligent interest in the new movement of art and letters. Whilst Mme. de Châteaubriand had been the friend of a warrior king at times when he was not warring, Mme. d'Etampes was the intellectual companion of a cultured man whose royalty was an incident. She never worried him with protestations of her own love, nor with demands upon his. She possessed the art of keeping him pleased, and practised it assiduously. She had no taste for politics, and she allowed the king to manage or mismanage his affairs of State as he chose, or as others chose for him, and she possessed tact enough to remain on good terms with these others. She came into the king's life at a fortunate moment, the moment when he turned from the horrors of imprisonment to a new life of gaiety, festivity, colour and movement. No one could have done more to foster these qualities than she. He was dying to be amused, and she amused him.

Putting aside the moral question of the position

of women like Mme. de Châteaubriand and Mme. d'Etampes at the Court, their individual point of view of it is interesting. The former lady, although her character was composed of nobler elements than that of her successor, for she never really reconciled her actions to her conscience, failed in every way to justify the step she had taken, whereas Mme. d'Etampes, though she may be said to have gloried in her shame, and probably never regretted her backsliding, put her hand to the plough without once turning back, and made an undoubted success of her venture. She was respected, because women of her class could make themselves respected in her day ; she was courted, and she became a genuine power to be reckoned with. She made limits and little laws that no one dared overstep ; she set fashions, and encouraged good taste and culture in others. She organized many of the amusements at Court, led the revels in person, and was everywhere acknowledged Queen of Fêtes. Her energies were never idle, her brain was fertile in new ideas, and she was as determined as the king himself to carry them out and promote legitimate pleasure and happiness as far as she was able.

Against this woman in particular the indictment has been made that her lover encouraged habits in his courtiers in which he himself indulged, and that in giving her a prominent position as his mistress, he practically authorized irregularities of

this kind. At the same time it must not be forgotten that these were days in which a cultured woman like Marguerite of Navarre, the king's sister, could write a book like the *Heptameron* for the purpose of entertaining her brother in the evenings, after he was tired with the day's hunting at Fontainebleau. Therefore it is obviously useless to take the measurement of behaviour at the Court of François I by means of the moral yardstick of to-day, and it becomes possible to give Mme. d'Etampes credit at least for obtaining remarkable results out of unpromising conditions.

Born in 1508, the young Anne de Pisseleu received a better education than most girls of her day. Her father had married three times, with the result that he was obliged to support a family of thirty children. It was therefore necessary to impress upon Anne early in life that her beauty and accomplishments must be turned to account in providing for the younger members of the household. At the age of seventeen she became maid of honour to the queen, and soon won a foremost place amongst the spoilt darlings of the Court. In the queen's service she first encountered Diane de Poitiers, and seeds of jealousy were undoubtedly sown in these early days.

Slowly but surely the Duchesse d'Etampes became a power in the land. Marot wrote complimentary verses to her, praised her pink-and-white complexion, thought her more *piquante* than

passionate, more amiable than loving, a woman "without temperament or leaning towards the romantic." He paid a tribute to her good sense as well as to her personal charms in one of the pretty verses which were much in vogue—

"Dix et huit ans je vous donne,
Belle et bonne ;
Mais à votre sens rassis
Trente-cinq ou trente-six
J'en ordonne."

As her power grew, so, of course, her independence grew. She amassed riches to shower them upon her protégés, and demanded honours for her relatives. Her husband, Jean de Brosse, who came in for the lion's share of these ill-gotten gains, became governor of Brittany. She began to define very clearly between those who were in her favour and those who were out of it, thus arousing storms of malice and envy as a natural consequence.

If François was the most gallant and least faithful of European monarchs, he chose a mistress who was a match for him in these particulars. Every one admired her, some ventured to love her. She dressed gorgeously in cloth of gold, with fine ermine, and she was loaded with jewellery. She had the style of an exquisite, and demanded that her surroundings should be expensive and luxurious. At Fontainebleau her room was the *Chambre d'Alexandre*, so called because of the marvellous paintings representing the deeds of Alexander

which decorated the walls. For her, too, the Grotte du Jardin des Pins was constructed and adorned by Primaticcio. The exterior of the grotto was ornamented with rock-work and shells, inlaid in symmetrical patterns. The entrance was guarded by grotesque stone satyrs. The interior was furnished with large crystal basins and fountains, but whether it was really a Salle de Bains, or merely served the purpose of an arbour and place of rest and refreshment is not certain. The ceilings were beautifully decorated by the same great artist. One design represented Minerva, the other Juno sitting under trellises in the form of cupolas. Birds, fishes and foliage were introduced into the design. The magnificence of the grotto was worthy of a great monarch and his fair lady, and this romantic retreat formed an appropriate background to various anecdotes of gallantry. Mme. de Villedieu is responsible for one of the best known of these stories, which turns upon the supposition that an arrangement of reflecting mirrors made it possible for would-be spectators surreptitiously to watch the bathers in the Salle de Bains. Mme. de Villedieu's memoirs are replete with pictures of life in the pleasure-palace which are probably more vivid than accurate, but possess some value since they represent certain phases of the society of the day.

She described a hunting-party at Fontainebleau in which Madeleine, the king's daughter,

Marguerite, his sister, Mlle. de Vendôme, his niece, the Duchesse d'Etampes, Diane de Poitiers and many other fair women took part. According to Mme. de Villedieu this party was in honour of Charles V, but as the Emperor did not visit Fontainebleau until 1539, and the other events of the story are connected with the presence of James V of Scotland at the French Court, which occurred in 1537, there is an obvious discrepancy in historical detail. At all events the particular hunt described was fast and furious, and many ladies were in at the death, which took place in one of the finest glades of the forest. The daughter of the king and Mlle. de Vendôme, her cousin, wearied with the violent exercise of the chase, fell behind the rest of the party and allowed their horses to walk. Presently they were joined by Don John, the handsome natural son of Charles V. Although the ladies warned him that he was likely to miss the most interesting part of the day's sport, he assured them that permission to remain in their company was his greatest desire. This being granted him, he used the opportunity to make himself exceedingly agreeable to both the ladies, and beloved by one. Presently they were joined by other members of the party, and all returned to the palace, where a ball was given by the queen at which the ladies danced in their hunting-costumes. It was obvious to many that Don John was deeply in love with Madame Madeleine, to whom he devoted his

attentions, to the discomfort of his rival, James V of Scotland, who was then endeavouring to arrange a marriage with the French king's daughter.

A little later Madeleine and Mlle. de Vendôme were discussing the turn affairs had taken in the flower-garden below the terrace of the palace, where they believed themselves less liable to be overheard than in their apartments, when Madeleine caught sight of something glittering among the tulip-beds, and ordered one of her ladies to secure it. It was found to be a beautiful crystal box studded with diamonds, containing an enamelled portrait of Diane de Poitiers. Naturally enough, the ladies believed that this pretty toy must be the property of the dauphin, and Madeleine undertook to restore it to her brother. Henri, however, failed to recognize the box, and seeing within the portrait of his mistress, immediately concluded that he had a rival. Unable to rest until the matter was explained, he set inquiries on foot, and learned to his astonishment that the jewel belonged to James V of Scotland. Prince Henri, who had a great affection for the foreign monarch, bitterly reproached him for his underhand way of attempting to win Diane's affections.

"What, Monsieur?" declared James, astounded, "you accuse me of loving Mlle. Saint-Vallier?"

"How otherwise do you explain the presence of her portrait in your box?" remarked the unhappy prince.

James could only surmise that the box had been stolen from him and its contents changed, but he told the dauphin on his word of honour that the portrait originally in the box was that of Madame Madeleine, she being the only object of his love.

“What, you adore my sister?” cried Prince Henri, astonished in his turn.

King James then proceeded to tell his future brother-in-law the story of his desire to make Madeleine his wife. On first beholding the king’s daughter, she had so greatly pleased him that he committed the indiscretion of watching her bathe in the Grotte du Jardin des Pins.

“It fell out thus,” he continued; “Madame Madeleine was bathing on a fine summer day in the magnificent grotto which your royal father had built near the apartments of the Duchesse d’Etampes. I had been told of the secret niche where by means of a reflecting mirror it becomes possible to observe the ladies in the bath. The king, your father, himself confided to me the arrangement he had planned. I won the good-will of the attendant at the grotto. He led me to the niche at the moment when Madame was about to step into the water. Pardon this boldness, my dear prince; the purity of my intentions excuses it, and it was punished rigorously enough to merit more compassion than anger. Mlle. de Vendôme had the privilege of conversing with Madame in

her bath, and whilst at first all went well, and I experienced indescribable delight in the modesty and beauty of the princess, these feelings were destined to receive a shattering blow." James V then proceeded to repeat the conversation he overheard which concerned Mme. Madeleine's rival lovers. The princess confessed with blushes that although she could not regard Don John with indifference, she owed a duty to the State, and would, if necessary, pay it to the uttermost by espousing the King of Scotland.

The historical facts which form the prosaic conclusion to so romantic a story, contain a large element of sadness. The marriage between King James and Madeleine took place at Notre Dame on January 1, 1537, amidst great rejoicing and supposed munificence on the part of the bridegroom, who was said to have presented his guests at a banquet with gold cups full of bonnet pieces. As a matter of fact, however, the expenses of the festivities were defrayed by the French king. In May the young couple journeyed to Scotland, where the new queen was received with hearty acclamations, a tribute to her brilliant but fragile beauty. Three months later, however, the country was plunged into deep mourning for this lovely lady, who died at the early age of sixteen. Brantôme tells the story thus: "When Madeleine was in Scotland," he wrote, "she found the country much as one had told her, and very different from gentle

France. Without showing any other signs of repentance, she merely remarked repeatedly, 'Alas, I wished to be queen,' smothering her sadness and the fire of her ambition with cinders of patience. She died of weariness."

Two years after her death a great event took place at Fontainebleau. Emperor Charles V visited his long-time enemy, François I. The imperial guest was on his way to Flanders to punish the rebellious inhabitants of Ghent. There had been a cessation of the hostilities between himself and the French king which had continued with short intervals throughout the whole of the latter's reign. Relations were considerably strained, and the visit of Charles was not unattended with danger to himself. "If the emperor dare to cross France," remarked the Court fool, Triboulet, to his master, on hearing of this intention, "I think he deserves to wear my shoes." "But suppose I let him pass through," replied the king. "Ah, sire! Perhaps in that case they would fit you best," was the privileged answer. Loyalty prevented François I from making use of his advantage, however. He entertained his rival, who was also his brother-in-law, right royally. Previously to the guest's arrival, great improvements had been made to the Pavillon des Poêles, his allotted apartments, and the Porte Dorée, the important entrance to the palace through which he was to pass. After an elaborate reception at Nemours, the emperor was

met at the edge of the forest by a number of cavaliers and ladies, the highest in the land, accompanied by a crowd of people disguised as fawns, satyrs, wood-nymphs, sylvan gods and goddesses, who danced to the sound of fifes and hautboys, then suddenly disappeared as though by magic in order that the emperor might proceed to the palace. Charles V was mounted on a black horse and the French king rode a white one. A triumphal arch erected at the Porte Dorée was ornamented with trophies and enriched with paintings and the interlaced initials of the monarchs who passed through it, the design including emblems of Peace and Concord. There a splendid concert was performed in honour of the guest. Having heard several pieces of music played, the emperor was conducted into the palace to the martial sound of trumpets and drums, and was shown into one of the fine galleries, where the king, who had preceded him, gave him renewed greetings. After that he was led to his apartments.

For many days the royal host organized tournaments, jousts, hunts, *fêtes*, balls, and every kind of diversion which might please the emperor. Queen Eléonore and the Connétable did their best to second the king's hospitality. The Duchesse d'Etampes, however, who hated the Spanish influence, was not so courteous, and she openly advised her lover not to dissemble his real feelings. Pointing to the duchess, François I remarked to

his brother-in-law, "There is a beautiful lady, my dear Charles, who thinks I ought not to let you depart until you revoke the Treaty of Madrid." The emperor replied calmly to this, "If the advice is good, brother, you should follow it." But the same day at dinner he let fall a diamond ring of great value close to the Duchesse d'Etampes, who was handing him a napkin, and when she picked up the ring and offered it to him, he refused it, saying, "Madame, it is in fair hands. It suits them beautifully." The story runs that this gallantry on the part of the emperor was an attempt to win the king's mistress to his point of view. It seems hardly likely, however, that so small a bait would influence the only lady in France at that moment who could have everything her heart desired.

One of the things she desired and achieved about this time was to oust Benvenuto Cellini from the king's favour. Great jealousy existed between the various artists, and was fostered by their special patronesses, among whom the Duchesse d'Etampes and Diane de Poitiers were the most powerful. Rosso, who had been commissioned to adorn the Galerie de François I, wishing to please the dauphin and his mistress, painted Diane as the Nymph of Fontainebleau, but the Duchesse d'Etampes, overcome by jealousy, was so enraged that she had the picture effaced and replaced by a work of Primaticcio representing Jupiter visiting Danaë, into

which her own portrait was introduced. This rivalry between Primaticcio and Rosso had serious consequences. The latter induced the king to send away the former, and Primaticcio was dispatched to Rome in 1540 ; but François I repented of this deed, and in his favourite's absence quarrelled with Rosso, who, troubled by this mark of disapproval, took poison. After his rival's death at Fontainebleau, Primaticcio returned, and for a time peace reigned among the artists. It did not continue for long, however. The struggle for supremacy between Primaticcio and Cellini was still more heated, and ended in the defeat and withdrawal of the latter, chiefly owing to the adverse influence exerted on his fortunes by the Duchesse d'Etampes. Cellini's memoirs recount the affair very fully, and also throw many sidelights on the king's patronage. François took a deep and sincere interest in the work of the various artists, passed many hours in their studios, and loved nothing better than lengthy discussions on their working methods and arguments concerning art in general.

Once the king visited Cellini accompanied by Madame d'Etampes, and began to talk of Fontainebleau. He desired that the artist should make a model for a fountain there, with, as Cellini himself says, "the finest invention I could think of, that being the most delightful place of recreation in his whole kingdom. He concluded with ordering me to exert my utmost efforts to produce something

masterly. I promised to do my best. The king, seeing such a number of works so far advanced, said to Madame d'Etampes, 'I never knew a man in his way that pleased me more, or that deserved to be more encouraged. We must endeavour to keep him here; he spends a great deal of money, is a good companion, and works hard. I am indeed under a necessity of thinking of him myself, for in all the times that he has been with me, or that I have been here, he has never asked for anything; his mind seems to be entirely taken up with his business. I must confer some favour on the man, for fear of losing him.' Madame d'Etampes replied, 'I will take care to put you in mind.'"

She was not so good as her word, however.

"First of all," continued Cellini, "I had designed the palace gate of Fontainebleau, and had made as little alteration as possible in the form of it, which, according to the whimsical taste of the French, seemed to be an odd mixture of greatness and littleness, for its form was almost square, with a semicircle over it bent like the handle of a basket, in which the king was desirous of having a figure to represent Fontainebleau."

He then showed to the king the beautiful designs he had wrought for him, and at the same time explained their significance, but he unfortunately neglected to include the Duchesse d'Etampes in this exhibition of his plans and his skill, and the latter "conceived so deep a resentment at the

neglect that she said with the utmost indignation, 'If Benvenuto had shown me his fine works I should have had reason to remember him at the proper time!'" Cellini tried to propitiate the king's angry mistress by presenting her with a fine piece of plate wrought to her own design. It was not so easy to recover this lady's good graces, however; she refused to see Cellini, and the latter, angered by her indifference, presented the beautiful cup he had intended for her to Cardinal de Lorraine. The result of his indiscretion was far-reaching, and was soon to be felt by him. He had made an implacable enemy of Mme. d'Etampes, who did everything she possibly could to injure and humiliate him. She set up rivalry between him and Primaticcio, whom she patronized, and through her interest the latter was ordered by the king to execute the designs originally submitted by Cellini, a fact of which he was not informed for some time; indeed, not until he had arrived at Fontainebleau prepared to carry out the orders given him. Overcome with anger at this unjust treatment, he presented himself before Primaticcio, who was then at the palace, and complained bitterly of what had taken place, even threatening his rival with instant death. Primaticcio, however, adopted conciliatory methods, and for the time being the enmity between them dropped. It was soon to reawaken. King François, really appreciative of the artist's wonderful designs, continued to patronize him, whereupon, in the words

of Cellini, "Madame d'Etampes, having heard of my encouragement, was more provoked against me than ever, and said, 'I govern the whole kingdom, and yet this insignificant fellow sets my power at defiance.' In a word, she left no stone unturned to effect my destruction."

Cellini had executed a beautiful figure of Jupiter in silver, which he wished to show to the king. He was ordered to place the statue at the end of a certain gallery, which he found occupied by much of Primaticcio's work, in the shape of bronze figures on pedestals, and enriched with paintings by Rosso. "Here also," wrote Cellini in his memoirs, "I introduced my Jupiter, and when I saw this great display of the wonders of art, I said to myself, 'This is like passing between the pikes of the enemy; Heaven protect me from all danger!' Having put the statue into its place, and fixed it in the most advantageous situation I could, I awaited the coming of the great monarch."

Mme. d'Etampes had delayed the king until the light was waning, in the belief that this would cause the work of art to appear to great disadvantage. Her plan, however, failed conspicuously. "On the approach of night," continued Cellini, "I lighted the torch in the hand of Jupiter, and as it was raised somewhat above his head, the light fell upon the statue, and caused it to appear to much greater advantage than it would otherwise have done. The king came, accompanied by Madame

d'Etampes, the dauphin his son (now king of France) and the dauphine, the king of Navarre his cousin, the Princess Margaret his daughter, and several great lords and noblemen, who had all been instructed by Madame d'Etampes to speak against me. When I saw his Majesty enter I ordered my boy Ascanio to push the statue of Jupiter before him, and this motion being made with admirable contrivance, caused it to appear alive ; thus the above-mentioned bronze figures were left somewhat behind, and the eyes of all the beholders were first struck with my performance. The king immediately cried out, ' This is one of the finest productions of art that ever was beheld ; I, who take pleasure in such things and understand them, could never have conceived a piece of work the hundredth part so beautiful ! ' The noblemen who had been directed to rail at my performance seemed now to vie with each other in praising it, but Madame d'Etampes said, with the utmost confidence, ' It appears to me that you are very much at a loss for something to commend, when you lavish encomiums upon that statue. Don't you see those beautiful antique figures which stand a little beyond it ? In these the utmost perfection of art is displayed, and not in those modern ridiculous works of art.' The king then advanced, as did the rest likewise, and cast an eye upon the other figures, which appeared to a great disadvantage, the light being placed below them. His Majesty observing this, said, ' Those

who have endeavoured to hurt this man have done him the greatest service imaginable ; for, from a comparison with these admirable figures, it is evident this statue is in every respect vastly superior to them ! ’ ’ ” Nevertheless, the Duchesse d’Etampes continued to depreciate Cellini’s work, and so greatly incensed was the latter that the king had to command his silence, and in order to appease him declared emphatically that he had brought over from Italy one of the ablest men that the world had ever produced, and one who was endowed with the greatest variety of talents. It was impossible, however, for Cellini to regain the favour of the king’s mistress, without which he could do little, and a few months later he left the French Court, thus clearing the path for Primaticcio.

This was one of Mme. d’Etampes’ last obvious triumphs. Although her influence in her own sphere remained paramount, signs were not wanting that her sphere was narrowing, whilst that of Diane was ever widening. François I was aging ; he was suffering from a terrible disease. He was beginning to feel that he required peace, more peace than was possible in the presence of his mistress, who grew more exacting day by day, and who still did all she could to stir up strife and factions. It was not only a struggle between the king and his duchess against the dauphin and Diane de Poitiers, but between their respective followers, and the king’s feeble state of health influenced many of

these to keep their gaze on the rising star, to the neglect of that which might at any hour suffer eclipse. Among the friends of the Duchesse d'Etampes were Bossut de Longueval, Marot the poet, Christian de Nançay, captain of the guards, Dampierre, the Comte de Mirandole and Admiral Brion. Diane had the Connétable de Montmorency on her side. In 1540 Brion had been accused of appropriating public moneys, and was arrested and brought to Fontainebleau before the king. Instead of attempting to justify himself he burst into an angry diatribe against François I, and was imprisoned and condemned to very severe punishment. Mme. d'Etampes, however, interceded for her favourite, who was thought also to be her lover, and was successful in obtaining mitigation of his sentence. According to Mme. de Villedieu's account, Brion was at one time her affianced husband, and when warned that any intrigue he might carry on in that quarter was certain to be his undoing, he declared boldly, "It is not I who have become the king's rival. The king stole my mistress from me." When Montmorency was disgraced, Brion was recalled.

Such things did not tend to smooth matters between "la plus savante des belles et la plus belle des savantes" (as the Duchesse d'Etampes was called by her flatterers) and the lady of whom she rudely declared, "I was born on the day the Grande Sénéchale was married." Actually

the duchess was some nine years younger than the woman who was to succeed her in power and with whom she carried on a constant war of slanders, calumnies and epigrams. Artists and poets were enlisted in this battle. The latter celebrated the duchess as possessing resplendent and unparalleled loveliness, and vilified her rival by describing her as a toothless and bald old woman, who concealed a multitude of wrinkles under the deceptive brilliancy of paint. The artists, on the other hand, revenged Diane by representing her in the most complimentary forms as a goddess and a huntress, Cellini modelling her in bronze with a quiver and hounds.

There is little or nothing to be said in justification of the petty squabbles indulged in freely by these ladies, but to Diane at least the last word fell. In the reign succeeding that in which her younger opponent flourished exceedingly, she rose to an equal position of influence, had as many honours in her power to bestow, and amassed as much wealth. In every way she may be regarded as an interesting and imposing figure, for there was something more exceptional about her than about many a king's mistress, however powerful, as appears from the story of her strange attachment to a man much younger than herself.

DIANE DE POITIERS
(THE NYMPH OF FONTAINEBLEAU)

Univ. of
California



DIANE DE POITIERS.

From a painting by Clouet.

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CHAPTER III

DIANE DE POITIERS

(THE NYMPH OF FONTAINEBLEAU)

THE first appearance of Diane de Poitiers in the story of Fontainebleau is more romantic than authentic. The episode possesses the elements of drama and is related by many French historians ; its accuracy, however, is questionable. Diane, when little more than a child in years, it was said, journeyed to Fontainebleau to supplicate François I on behalf of her father, the Comte de Saint-Vallier, who was accused of complicity in the plot of Charles de Bourbon, the Connétable, against his sovereign. Saint-Vallier was condemned to death. His young daughter appeared before the king veiled, and her pleading childish voice was not sufficiently persuasive to melt his obduracy. Besides, Saint-Vallier had influence, and might not be set free with impunity. Then Diane, driven to extremities by her anxiety to save one she loved from death upon the scaffold, threw aside her veil of a sudden, and the heart of François I was softened by the charms of her face and figure, so that,

relenting, he granted her request at the expense of her honour.

This version of the affair was based on a vague reference in the contemporary *Journal d'un Bourgeois de Paris*,¹ and was perpetuated by Brantôme, who put into the mouth of Saint-Vallier, on his descent from the scaffold, some words which were as *piquante* as they appear to be fictitious, and which no doubt appealed to the early historians on account of the former quality. Régnier de la Planche was one of the first to pronounce against the virtue of Diane, Mezeray follows suit, giving in addition the information that Diane was fourteen years old when the event took place, and Sauval in his *Amours des Rois de France*, does not hesitate to repeat the statement without the slightest attempt to verify it. Had he endeavoured to do so, he would have discovered that in 1523, when Saint-Vallier was condemned to death for treason, his daughter, who was born in 1499 was twenty-four years old, had been married to Louis de Brézé, Grand-Sénéchal of Normandy, for more than eight years, and was the mother of two little girls. The publication of these facts eliminates to a great extent the interest and picturesqueness which the original story seems to have possessed for those who told it, and it becomes still more highly improbable when it is remembered that the death

¹ First published for La Société de l'Histoire de France by M. Ludovic Lalanne, 1854.

sentence was commuted to one, almost equally severe, of life-imprisonment in a tiny cell containing a single aperture, a barred window, through which food and drink were to be handed to the captive. François I was not usually so niggardly of reward where he loved. The fact that Diane did not win more from him is all in favour of her innocence, and it is probable that the entreaties of her husband were as much instrumental in moving the king to clemency as her own.

Her name was not entirely cleared by these discoveries, however. Scandal-loving historians, being deprived by the evidence of dates of a dainty morsel, shifted their ground and asserted still that Diane was mistress to François I, basing their surmises on some unsigned letters found at the Bibliothèque Nationale, and on a passage contained in the dispatches of Contarini, Venetian Ambassador at the Court of France. Such a connection appears to be very improbable indeed, and as neither events nor consequences support a belief in it, it may be ignored, since it cannot be refuted with certainty.

The character of Diane de Poitiers was practical, simple, governed by a leading motive, and rarely, if ever, busied with side issues ; her life-story, according to historical accounts, and stripped of fictional trimmings, is equally straightforward and direct, and because she is essentially human and matter of fact, she is seen to far better

advantage in the plain light of truth than in the limelight which a number of her biographers have endeavoured to throw upon her.

The place of her birth is unknown, but Diane passed the early years of her life at the Château de Saint-Vallier, and by the time she was six years old she was accustomed to ride and hunt with her father, and had trained her falcon to do good work. The habits of childhood clung to her until late in life. She was accustomed to rise early in the morning to mount on horseback and scour the country-side. Upon her return home she lay down on a sofa to rest until it was time for the light midday meal, occupying her mind with reading and study. Affianced at the early age of ten, she was married to Louis de Brézé before she was sixteen. He was thirty years older than herself, ugly, misshapen, but rich and in a position of influence. From his grandmother, the gentle Agnès Sorel, mistress of Charles VII, he had received the title of the Comte de Maulevrier, and his father was descended from good old Normandy stock.

Diane's married life seems to have been domestic, calm and uneventful. She made her appearance at Court among the queen's maids of honour, but nothing of exceptional importance occurred to her for the next fifteen or sixteen years. At the end of that period, in 1531, her husband died, and though his widow appears to have deeply and sincerely regretted him, for she lived a more

or less secluded life in the country for some years, and never dressed in anything more gay than black and white, which suited her admirably, the seeds of her real romance had already been sown, and they bore ample fruit.

At the marriage festivities of Eléonore and François I in 1530, a tournament was held in the Rue Saint-Antoine at which Prince Henri, then but a stripling, and Duc d'Orléans, broke his first lance in honour of the most fascinating woman present, who happened to be Diane de Poitiers, "*la belle parmi les belles.*" One would think there was but little material in this from which to construct a love affair. Diane was already thirty-one years old, had two daughters and was not yet a widow. Her loveliness was of the type which endures, for it arose chiefly from good health, equable temper and sane living ; indeed, she owed it to her judicious indulgence in fresh air, hard exercise and cold baths. She was tall and well made, her carriage was proud and full of dignity, her features clear cut and regular, her complexion pale and transparent. Besides these charms she was able to discourse well though not wittily, for she possessed practical knowledge and book-learning, rather than brilliant imagination or originality. She had studied history, astrology, and was well versed in the chivalric literature of the day. Here was surely the very woman to charm a man of mature years, one who was tired of the empty-headed butterfly

creatures to be found by dozens at Court ; and, behold, it was unsophisticated youth that fell under her spell, the morose Henri, heavy and unversed in social arts. His manner still bore traces of the years passed in a Spanish prison, deprived of the gentler influences which mean much in a youth's life. François I looked askance at his uncouth second son. He had never cared for dreamy and sullen children, and far preferred the dauphin who had his own gay, vivacious humour and smartness. He compared the two boys, greatly to Henri's disadvantage. What was to be done with him ? How lick the young cub into shape ? François I had a firm belief in a woman's influence, and it seemed that a woman's help was required in this instance. A marriage was already projected with Catherine de Médicis, and that might do wonders. But Catherine was still a mere child, a Florentine and niece of the Pope. Negotiations could not, of course, be carried through at once. In the meantime—— Perhaps at this point of the king's imaginings his eye fell on Diane de Poitiers, and he pondered over her beauty and her evident attraction for Henri. Could there be danger in it ? If so his marriage must be hurried on. If not——? He spoke to Diane and openly expressed his fears that the young Duc d'Orléans would cut but a poor figure at Court unless he was taken in hand and —*trained*.

Now Diane had observed the young princes

closely from childhood. Because they were motherless, and being herself a mother, she had studied their character with a keen eye and discovered that Henri, apparently friendless, secretive and retiring, only required handling with a sympathetic touch to awaken his powers of intellect and judgment. Perhaps she pointed this out to the boy's father. Perhaps she boasted that she could influence the young prince and make something of him. Whether or not, the result is known to history. She succeeded in mollifying his wayward and savage nature. The means she employed at first were gentleness and persuasion. She sought to interest him by her brightness and her insinuating manner. She appealed to his better self and brought out his dormant powers. Gradually he opened the hidden recesses of his mind to her and to her alone, and by dint of mothering and befriending him she gained an influence which endured to the last day of his life. She did more than this. At the tournament in the Rue Saint-Antoine, Henri was little more than a child—children in those days were precocious—before many months had passed he was a grown man with all a man's passion for a beautiful woman who, possessed of more years and experience than he, had a marvellous gift of inspiring him with a confidence and self-dependence he had never previously known. Moreover, they had many tastes in common. Diane was of the robust type in a day when

was not especially prepossessing. The Ambassador Suriano described her as small, thin, and with a face that had no distinguished features. "She has large eyes," he said ; " quite those of the Médicis family." But she made up in good spirits what she lacked in good looks. "She was excellent company," wrote Brantôme, "and of gay humour ; loving all honourable exercises, such as dancing, in which she had great grace and majesty, shooting with the cross-bow and playing at pall-mall." She also loved hunting, said the same author, and begged the king always to take her with him, and this he did "because he liked her, and delighted in giving her pleasure in the hunt, at which she never left his side, but followed him at full speed. She was very good on horseback, and bold, sitting at ease and being the first to put her leg over the pommel, which was far more graceful and becoming than riding with the feet upon a plank. Till she was sixty years of age and over she liked to ride on horseback, and after her weakness prevented her she pined for it. It was one of her greatest pleasures to ride far and fast, though she fell many times with damage to her body, breaking her leg once and wounding her head." In daring in the hunting-field she rivalled Diane, but in her domestic life she made no attempt at self-assertion, biding her time and remaining inactive, like a half-grown tigress waiting for the opportunity to spring.

As Duchesse d'Orléans she was an unimportant

nobody, but the sudden death of the dauphin in 1537 left Henri and his wife in the line of direct succession and gave the half-fledged prince a chance of breaking through the shell he had already cracked by the help of Diane de Poitiers.

His position at Court was entirely changed and he began to assert himself and show himself in his true colours. He was capable, at least, but not brilliant. Dandolo, the Venetian Ambassador, described him only a few years later. "The *serenissime* dauphin," he wrote in 1542, "is twenty-three years old, he has a very agreeable presence, rather tall than short, neither stout nor thin, but so well formed that he appears to be made of muscle; he is indefatigable at such physical exercises as hunting and fighting, in which he conducts himself right nobly, perhaps better than any other cavalier in France. . . . Albeit he hath a sombre and taciturn nature. He laughs rarely, hardly smiles even, and a number of those at Court assure me that they have not seen him laugh once." Cavalli, another of the Venetians, who knew the dauphin five years later, describes him as being of robust constitution, of rather melancholy humour, well skilled in the use of arms; not smart of repartee, but sound and firm in judgment. "That which he says once, he holds to," continues the same Ambassador. "His intelligence is not of the readiest, but often men of this stamp succeed the best. . . . He is not

much attracted by women, his wife suffices : with regard to conversation he prefers that of Madame la Sénéchale of Normandy, who is forty-eight years old. He shows a real tenderness for her ; but there is thought to be nothing passionate in his affection, and that it is of the nature of that between mother and son. It is said of this lady that she undertook to educate, correct and advise the dauphin, and to encourage him to achieve everything worthy of him."

It is not possible to believe with Cavalli that Diane was no more to Henri than "*une nymphe Égérie*." Every ounce of evidence points to the fact that she was his mistress, that she rejoiced in his love and that there was something very exceptional, very interesting, very clever about the woman who could bridge over the score of years she had lived in advance of her lover and meet him on absolutely equal terms. There is perhaps no case which is quite parallel to that of Diane and Henri. Some writers have squeezed their story dry of all romance by picturing a middle-aged matronly person, keeping a young and infatuated king tied to her apron string, others have gone to the different extreme by representing her as an enchantress who has bewitched her knight by means of a potent love draught. The truth is as near the one as the other. There is nothing prosaic nor yet absurd in Henri's love for his mistress. The letter from Fontainebleau already

quoted contains a genuine expression of feeling. There is another written from the same place, in which he says, "I cannot live without you, and if you knew how little pastime I can find here, you would pity me." And Diane, none of whose letters to the king are extant, tells the story of the wooing in romantic verse—which is possibly not her own verse. She explains that one fine morning a young Cupid in all his fresh light-footed, bashful youth came roaming in her neighbourhood, filling her mantle with marjoram and jonquilles, casting a spell upon her. She resisted, shutting eyes and ears against him, though her heart seemed melting within her : she would listen to no promises, no oaths. He held out to her a wonderful laurel wreath, a queen's crown. "No," she declared ; "better be wise than a queen," and yet she felt herself thrilling and trembling, and in the end she yielded—

Et comprendrez sans peine
Duquel matin je prétends reparler.

"Nor will you find it hard to tell on what fair morning this befell," she adds, concluding the poem. There is something more than motherly interest here. She possessed the qualities for beguiling and for being beguiled, for captivating a man's heart, and enchaining not only his senses but his common-sense. The real secret of her success was that she knew how to make herself

indispensable in every possible emergency. Beauty alone could not do it, intelligence alone could not do it, nor tact, nor good nature, nor even adaptability. Diane proved that she possessed all these things in her relations to Henri, though she might have shown them to others more often to her advantage; and still there was something more. She was not subtle, she was practical. She had sound judgment, and she used it and made other people realize its soundness, often in spite of themselves. Henri came to rely upon her in every way, and she never failed him. It became a habit with him to do so; one he never broke as long as he lived. If he wanted motherly advice she had it ready for him; if he wanted sisterly sympathy or friendship's counsel she knew how to give it; if he appealed to her as a rapturous lover, she responded passionately; and if, more than all, he chose to exact from her wifely duty and fidelity, he had named the *rôle* which suited her the best of all. She was not cold, as some have declared, she was well balanced, and in her case head and heart happened to be devoted to the same object. Undoubtedly she seemed to carry all before her, and it is not surprising that she was thought to be in league with supernatural powers and in possession of the secret of eternal youth. Michelet wrote of her: "See her at Fontainebleau under a double aspect, there celestial, luminous queen of night, here Diane surrounded by infernal flames, a

sombre Hecate. . . . We are not in a natural world. This is an enchantment and it can only be carried out by violent spells and dramatic strokes. The Armida of fifty years who holds a king of thirty in leash must use her magic wand daily." How did she do it? Michelet, for all his extravagance, gives a good reason. This is his receipt: "To be affected by nothing, to love nothing, to sympathize with nothing. To keep of the passions only what will give some slight rapidity to the blood; to take pleasures that are mild and without violence; to love gain and pursue wealth. . . . Absence of soul on the one hand, cultivation of the body on the other. The body and beauty singularly cared for, not only adored in the manner of many women who kill themselves through excessive self-love, but treated in a virile manner; a hardy *régime* which is the safeguard of life."

This is more nearly the true Diane than the lady of whom Brantôme said "that every day she drank soluble gold and other drugs" and that if she had lived "for a hundred years she would never have grown old either in face, for it was well moulded, or in body." He declared that at the age of seventy Diane was "as beautiful, as fresh and lovable as though she were not more than thirty." Alas for his veracity! Diane died at the age of sixty-four, and Brantôme would have done better to conclude his remarks after he had said, "I saw this lady six months before she died,

still so beautiful that I know not of a heart of stone capable of resisting her." A French author devotes a small volume to the *Secrets de Beauté de Diane de Poitiers*. "These grand destinies," he declares, "to be beautiful at thirteen, more beautiful at twenty, not less beautiful at thirty, and continuously beautiful at sixty." Legend has busied itself with Diane's appearance, but if her charms and her influence and the mysterious powers possessed by her are exaggerations, and she was in reality a homely, sensible, practical and rather grasping Court lady, she is none the less interesting and far more human on that account. The manner in which she handled her royal lover and put her rivals into the shade is really inimitable.

Poor Catherine de Médicis had not a ghost of a chance in competition with her. She was stripped of everything but the bare comfort of a legal title and the possibility of becoming some day Queen of France and the mother of French kings. For ten years after her marriage fulfilment of the latter hope was denied her and the former hung in the balance. Because she had no children the question of her divorce was mooted and she appealed in person to King François I, declaring with tears that she would sacrifice herself for the good of France if necessary. Thereupon the king relented, and agreed that things should remain as they were. There was therefore great rejoicing

when a son and heir was born at Fontainebleau to the dauphin in 1543. The dauphine's cup of happiness was somewhat chilled no doubt by the fact that it was Diane who made much of the new baby, nursed the mother, and later took upon herself the upbringing of the little prince. She always played the most important part in Henri's domestic affairs, and was the leading spirit in household matters as she was the soul of the festivities, hunts, *fêtes* and tournaments.

Royalty in these days was not maintained without vast expenditure for the sake of picturesque effect. Every birth, wedding or funeral which occurred was the excuse for pageants, processions and festivities, arranged by artists, one event competing with another in sumptuousness and extravagance. The mere recital of such display is apt to grow wearisome, and yet it forms an essential part of life in the pleasure palace of Fontainebleau.

On the occasion of the birth of the baby prince who was to mount the throne as François II, a grand baptism took place in the Chapelle de la Sainte-Trinité, then called Chapelle des Mathurins, on Sunday, February 10, 1543. Three hundred torches, wrote Father Dan,¹ were given to as many individuals of the king's bodyguard, of the dauphin's and the Swiss guards who lined the way from his Majesty's chamber to the church, through

¹ Dan, *Le Trésor des Merveilles de la Maison Royale de Fontainebleau*.

the small gallery, where the glare of the lights was so great that it equalled full daylight. Then followed two hundred gentlemen of the household, and a number of knights. The King of Navarre, the Ducs d'Orléans, de Vendôme, d'Estouteville, de Guise, de Nevers, de Longueville, d'Etampes and the Comte d'Aumale were present, as well as the Venetian Ambassador. Then came also Monseigneur, the papal legate, with several cardinals and other prelates.

Afterwards the queen, and all the princesses then at Court, followed the procession ; Madame Marguerite, daughter of the king, married to the Duc de Savoie, the Princesse de Navarre, Mme. de Saint-Pol, the two Duchesses de Nevers, Mme. de Montpensier, Mme. de Guise, the Duchesse d'Etampes, and several other ladies who were superbly gowned in cloth of gold and silver, and wearing quantities of jewellery which made a marvellous blaze. Amidst this elect crowd the infant was carried to the font.

The gorgeous pageant proceeded to the said Chapelle des Mathurins, whither the king went also. The church was hung with the finest tapestries and other ornaments. In the centre, where the actual baptism was performed, was a canopy of cloth of silver. The Cardinal de Bourbon conducted the ceremony.

The king was one of the godfathers, and bestowed the name of François upon the child.

The Duc d'Orléans, third son of France and paternal uncle to the little prince, was the other godfather, and Madame Marguerite was the godmother.

The ceremony performed, the child was taken back into the palace, the procession being of equal magnificence. Soon afterwards a feast was held in the Salle de Bal, and later there were ballets, dances, and other rejoicings which continued for several days.

Three vessels flying coloured flags and streamers were launched on the great lake, a bastion was erected and the festivities concluded with mimic warfare and tournaments.

The same lake was frequently the scene of aquatic sports and suchlike amusements. During the preceding winter, when it was frozen and covered with snow, the dauphin challenged all and sundry to a snowball fight, in which the ladies took part, and the fun was fast and furious.

In 1544 festivities were held at Fontainebleau in connection with the victory won at Ceresole by the Duc d'Enghien. In the same year one or two improvements were carried out at the palace. Philibert de l'Orme was appointed Superintendent of the Buildings, under the patronage of Diane. Later he became her favourite and under his hands the stately and beautiful Château of Anet took shape. Additions were also made to the library

at Fontainebleau of 2000 volumes from Blois, and these were placed in the charge of Duchâtel, who was successor to Budæus.

In the following year another opportunity was given to Diane de Poitiers of playing the domestic *rôle*, which suited her admirably. A princess was born at Fontainebleau on April 2, 1545, who was called Elisabeth and surnamed *Princesse de la Paix* because, through her marriage, peace was brought about between France and Spain. At the time of her birth peace had just been concluded between François I and Henry VIII of England. The latter monarch stood godfather, and was represented at the Court by Lord Dudley and Lord Cheney.

The Cour du Donjon was chosen for the chief scene of the baptism, and was hung with rich tapestries of gold, silver and silk. In the centre of the court a beautiful pavilion had been erected with porticoes ornamented with foliage and covered with French and English crests and mottoes. In the centre was a tall mast, richly gilt. An awning of blue silk, on which shone countless golden stars, covered the court, and threw a soft and pleasant light over the whole. In this pavilion, wrote Father Dan, describing the gorgeous scene, was erected a pyramid of nine stages, covered with cloth of gold. These were loaded with royal gold plate, and all the vases, cups and objects of art collected, as it would appear, from all the royal

residences throughout Europe. This mass of riches dazzled the eyes, in spite of the fact that the gold itself was of least value; the workmanship, the antiquity and beauty of form having considerably more worth. In order to make these qualities known to those who were not informed, the king had placed officials of the household who were commissioned to explain the origin and rarity of these works of art to all the bystanders, more especially the English and other foreigners who viewed this magnificent display. Among the antiquities some had actually belonged to Charlemagne.

The procession was formed, princes and nobility marched forth from the royal apartments preceded by his Majesty, and followed by Lord Dudley and Lord Cheney, the latter carrying the royal infant in his arms. Then followed the queen, the princesses and other ladies of the Court all magnificently attired. The procession crossed the small gallery and entered the Chapelle de la Sainte-Trinité. The king was received at the entrance by the Cardinals of France, accompanied by archbishops, bishops and other prelates dressed in their pontifical robes. Cardinal de Bourbon performed the ceremony. The godmothers were Eléonore of Austria, and Jeanne, Princess of Navarre, and the godfather was Henry VIII, represented as already stated by the two English envoys. As soon as the child's name was proclaimed by the heralds

of France and England, trumpets, clarions and hautboys sounded amidst a discharge of fireworks, carbines and cannons.

A splendid banquet, of which the entire Court partook, followed the religious ceremony.

Sumptuous as was the feast, the ball that followed was equally diverting. Men with huge masks, and dressed to represent wild beasts, birds of prey, griffons, eagles, vultures and so forth took part in it.

On the following day the festivities were continued, a tournament lasting the whole of the day. The dauphin and the Comte de Laval opened it, each of them commanding a body of knights.

The dauphin's men wore white and black, their helmets surmounted by the crescent moon. The white caparisons of the horses were also embroidered with the crescent. The opposing party's colours were red. This was one of the brilliant events of the closing years of François I's reign. The dauphin won all the honours of the joust, and laid them at the feet of Diane as usual. That lady was, of course, queen of the occasion, and was sumptuously attired in the black and white she always affected, cut low on the bosom to disclose her fine neck. Henri had adopted her colours, and jealous Catherine had to endure the sight of the Court wearing the black and white of her elderly rival.

“Que voulez-vous, Dianne bonne,
Que vous donne ?
Vous n’eustes comme j’entends
Jamais tant d’heur au printemps
Qu’en automne,”

sang Clement Marot, at one time himself *sous le charme*. Diane’s triumph was nearing its zenith, for at the close of 1546, the king, who had long been troubled with a painful disease, became rapidly worse, and it seemed probable that he had not long to live. The courtiers began to turn their thoughts away from the setting to the rising sun. The dauphin was preparing to mount the throne, and Vielleville¹ told the story of him that one day when surrounded by intimates he declared that on his accession he intended to confer such and such offices, and he apportioned them amongst those present. A simple, elderly and foolish person called Briandas was a witness of the scene, and his presence had been carelessly disregarded by the others. Either on his own initiative, or on that of the Duchesse d’Etampes, he ran to the king and declared aloud, “God protect thee, François de Valois.” The king, astonished, inquired what he meant. “By the blood of G——! thou art no longer king,” continued the imbecile. “I have just witnessed it. And you, M. de Thaïs, you no longer superintend the artillery, Brissac does that!”

¹ *Mémoires de Vielleville*, chapter xxiv. Vielleville places this story in the year 1538, but the Connétable Montmorency was not disgraced until 1541.

And to another he said, "You are no longer chamberlain, Saint-André has taken your place." Then addressing himself to the king: "By G——'s death! you will soon have M. the Connétable ruling you with a rod of iron, and making you play the fool! Be off with you, for, by G——'s truth! you are no better than a dead man!"

Thereupon the king sent for the Duchesse d'Etampes and they induced the imbecile to tell them the names of all the newly made officials of the Crown. Then the king, taking with him thirty of the Scottish guards, betook himself to the dauphin's apartments in the palace. Henri having been warned in time, only a few page boys were found there, and these were sent flying through the windows at the halberd's point. Then the guards smashed and destroyed everything. It was all the king could do. He could not remove his heir.

The dauphin remained absent and the courtiers did their best to effect a reconciliation. But the king, troubled by these dissensions, fell desperately ill at Fontainebleau. His courtiers deserted him and thronged around the dauphin. In order to pay them out for their negligence François, who intended to die game in spite of his terrible malady, feigned complete recovery and, as Father Dan wrote, "by painting his face a little and dressing with scrupulous care, he managed to appear more

like a young courtier than a man of his age and condition." On Corpus Christi day he attended the usual procession, and even wished to assist in bearing the panoply which was carried over the Blessed Sacrament, and having returned to his chamber he said, with a last gleam of the authority he feared to lose, "I will frighten them once more before I die." In fact the news of his recovery was mooted abroad and the deserters came back cringing and asking pardon. But the end was not far off, and death overtook him at Rambouillet on March 31, 1547.

It was now that the real reign of Diane commenced. The nymph of Fontainebleau became its queen. Although nearing the age of fifty she nevertheless presided over hunts, festivals and tournaments, whilst Catherine de Médicis remained in the background, neglected and melancholy. The reign of Henri II was one of *fêtes*, prodigalities and persecutions, and Diane was equally delighted to participate in all. Her activity knew no bounds. Henri loaded her with presents of money and of land, and bestowed upon her the title of the Duchesse de Valentinois.

Her first act after the death of François I was to bring about the downfall of her rival, the Duchesse d'Etampes. She induced her to part with the diamonds the king had given her, made a plot to kill her lover, Jarnac, which, however, failed, and watched her with an almost unholy joy when she

departed into retirement through the *Porte Dorée* as she left Fontainebleau for ever.

Catherine de Médicis did not receive much better treatment at her hands. There were many ways in which she found it possible to humiliate her both as queen and mother. Diane gave free play to her taste for French art, and Catherine had no longer any say in the decorations of the pleasure palace, which were placed in the hands of Philibert de l'Orme, Jean Goujon and Cousin. The question of religion also came between them, and Diane, staunch Catholic as she was, read with a foreseeing eye the fact that Catherine wavered, leaning towards the Reformers. "Madame de Valentinois," wrote Tavannes, "kept the queen out of her husband's affairs, and the queen complained to him so that he offered to cut the favourite's nose off." She preferred, however, to resort to less drastic measures, and waited peacefully until her hour was come. Meanwhile Diane urged Henri to decorate the ball-room, and her emblem appeared in glowing colours upon its walls. Primaticcio was rewarded for designing the famous interlaced initials. Duchâtel was retained by her as head of the royal library until his death, and replaced by Pierre de Montdorré. She reigned supreme both in the palace and in the forest. No one knew better than she how to arrange the hunt; her kennels were the best, her horses the fleetest. But at Fontainebleau the king was not only hers. She

could not absolutely ignore the queen's claims. Anet was her castle, the little city over which she ruled with no fear of a rival, where her servants formed an army, her secretary was a poet, her steward an artist, where she had a magnificent heronry, flocks and herds of rare and beautiful birds and beasts, and whither she could call her lover to her at any moment, even when he should have been at the bedside of his sick wife. Besides, his children often played in the gardens of Anet, whither their mother never accompanied them.

As for Diane's own daughters, she married one of them to the Duc de Bouillon and the other to the Duc d'Aumale, third son of the house of Guise, and the power of that hated family grew and became more dominating from day to day. The latter marriage took place at Fontainebleau in August 1547, and in November of the same year Princess Claude was born at the palace. A tournament was held in the Cour du Cheval Blanc, and for this occasion an amphitheatre was constructed in which Diane occupied the most prominent position. Four of the children of France were born at Fontainebleau in Henri's reign, Claude and Henri III, originally named Edward Alexander, and the twins, Victoria and Joan, who died young.

But the magnificence, profusion and splendour of the palace under François I were not

maintained throughout the reign of his son. Henri's interests were more divided than those of his father. The records show that the Court was frequently there, and a number of Diane's letters bear the imprint, "written at Fontainebleau." Many of them were addressed to M. de Humières, the Governor of the royal children, and they are practical in the extreme, even prosaic.

In the fifties the most notable events at the palace were visits paid by Mary Stuart, already promised girl-wife to the dauphin. Self-willed even as a child, she preferred Diane de Poitiers' society to that of her future mother-in-law, whom she called "une fille de marchands." She loved the fair fields and forests of Fontainebleau, and played a conspicuous part in the festivities there. She no doubt thought of the palace as one of her future homes. It was there she signed the act by which the kingdom of Scotland was to belong to the Crown of France in case she died without issue. This was in April 1558, a year before the fatal accident which was to make her Queen of France and which ended the power enjoyed by Henri II's mistress. On the occasion of the marriage of Elisabeth of France to Philip II of Spain a grand tournament took place in the Rue Saint-Antoine. Refusing to heed the astrologer's warning, Henri did battle and met his death-stroke in the listed field. Eleven days later he was breathing his last, and Catherine's day had begun.

She commanded her rival to return the Crown jewels and to withdraw to one of her private residences. Diane was seen no more at Fontainebleau, and Catherine, with the characteristics of the tigress, turned to try her strength.

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**CATHERINE DE MÉDICIS
(MOTHER OF THREE KINGS)**

CHAPTER IV

CATHERINE DE MÉDICIS

(MOTHER OF THREE KINGS)

FREED from the tyranny of her rival, Diane, her husband dead, her eldest son so feeble that he bent beneath the weight of the Crown, Catherine began to rule in deadly earnest. François II was called by his friends "the king without vices," by his enemies, "the king without virtues"; he acquiesced in placing the reins of government in his mother's hands. The wily Catherine was a sinister figure at Fontainebleau as elsewhere. She shares with Christina of Sweden the doubtful honour of bringing a gruesome element into the fair story of the palace. Whereas the latter openly committed the crime of bloodshed within the palace walls, the former, more subtle and evil-minded, cloaked her murderous thoughts beneath an outward appearance of festivity, gaiety and luxury. In the midst of princely entertainments she hatched vile and ghastly plots, from amongst the guests who surrounded her she singled out those she loathed to be recipients of her smiles and pretty speeches; she made fair promises to those

whose political power she dared not challenge, valueless protestations emanating from a perverted brain. Through the galleries to the terraces and so into the fair gardens beside the still waters of the lake she moved stealthily, revolving in her mind possible means by which she could secure and dispatch her victims. Her glance roved to the palace windows and lingered where behind the casement there lurked an unsuspecting foe, his fate already sealed. Sooner or later her blow, struck from behind, would accomplish its treacherous work. Was this lust for blood, this gloating cruelty, this corruption and insatiable desire for power compatible with sanity? Was the mind whole which harboured the cunning of the fox, the fierceness of the tiger, and the death-dealing poison of the reptile? Surely not. Catherine de Médicis, the solitary and unwholesome figure, on whose head vituperations have been poured for centuries without ceasing, cannot be classified amongst the strong-minded, calculating evil-doers. There are signs of hysterical weakness, of religious perversion, and of physical distemper about her actions sufficient to justify the creeping of pity, if not of sympathy, into the censure they merited. Early years of intense repression followed by ten of continuous child-bearing as a prelude to freedom, power and unlimited self-indulgence in surroundings so turbulent that the clearest judgment and strongest grip would have barely sufficed

to mould them, fostered corrosive germs in mind and body, and rendered her a subject more fit for the student of morbid psychological phenomena than for the descriptive pen of the historian.

Her sway begun, she hesitated for some time between allying herself with the Guises or the Bourbons, who threatened to rend France between them. She recognized the fact that disadvantages were to be reaped on both sides. She feared the power of the Guises, but dreaded their enmity still more, so chose them for her friends, whilst at the same time she shiftily determined to baffle their tyranny. Had she been stronger and more upright in her dealings she would have fared better, but her shortsightedness led her to dismiss Connétable de Montmorency, who promptly sided with the Bourbons and became a factor in the Opposition. With the result of increasing the already unsettled state of the kingdom, Catherine chose to dally with the Huguenot party, whose powerful supporters were the Prince de Condé and Admiral de Coligny, thus laying the foundations of the religious differences which before many years had passed were to lay waste the country. A more immediate outcome of her policy was to bring about an Assembly at Fontainebleau, which was called in the hope of establishing terms of reconciliation and good feeling between the warring religious parties. The council met in the

apartments of the Queen Regent in August 1560. The Court was already installed in the palace in July, and the opening of the Assembly was fixed for the 21st of the succeeding month. "We have come here," wrote Catherine to the Bishop of Limoges, in a letter dated July 28, "to Fontainebleau, to take a good resolution in all our affairs, and to establish them in good order; this is not, as you may imagine, the work of one day, nor of one month, therefore we have been here a fortnight or more and we expect to stay for three or four." As a matter of fact, however, the deliberations lasted but four days. The king dispatched a special courier to the Connétable de Montmorency asking him to be present. I purpose to call together, he wrote, "all those of my council to resolve with them, and by their advice, several great and important things appertaining to our welfare, and as you are one of their number I desire to see you at the said Assembly." The Connétable arrived at the palace on the 17th, accompanied by a little army of gentlemen. The Cardinals de Bourbon, de Lorraine, de Guise and de Châtillon were present, also the Ducs de Guise, d'Aumale and de Montpensier, the Maréchal de Saint-André, the Maréchal de Brissac, Monluc, Bishop of Valence, Coligny and members of the Privy Council. The king, having but recently passed through the terrors of Amboise, opened the Assembly in the fear and trembling that was his usual attitude when called

upon to act in public. The young queen, Mary Stuart, stood wondering and silent, a bright spot of beauty enlivening the severity of the proceedings. Catherine was erect and watchful, awaiting the opportunity to utter words of flattery or scorn, as might appear to serve her purpose best. The first day's proceedings included the king's introductory address, a speech by the Chancellor, Michel de l'Hôpital, concerning "the nation's distressful circumstances, the nobility, the magistrates, and the corruption of manners amongst men of all ranks,"¹ a discussion by the Duc de Guise on military matters, and by the Cardinal de Lorraine on the financial position, as well as an outline of the religious state of France. The meeting of the Assembly was then adjourned and met again on the third day in the same order as before, when important speeches were delivered by Monluc and Coligny. The former opened the debate with a denunciation of some of the vices of the clergy, and turning to the queens and the king recommended them to listen to sermons every day, continuing sternly in the following words: "Pardon me if I presume to entreat that you will order the ladies at Court to sing the Psalms of David instead of foolish songs, and such spiritual melodies as contain the praises of God." Coligny, interrupting this discourse, made a great speech. He handed a petition to the king expressing disapproval of the

¹ De Thou, *Histoire Universelle*.

Conspiracy of Amboise, and demanding toleration for the Protestants. He threatened to enforce his request at the sword's point, declaring he could raise an army of fifty thousand men. It was the first occasion on which he had publicly announced himself a Huguenot, and his fervour occasioned a flutter of excitement. The direct outcome of the conference was a Convocation of the States General ; indirectly it resulted in civil war.

Four months later the king lay dying, but not even death could render him more a cipher in affairs of State than he had been in life. His wife was left lamenting the sudden change in her fortunes and the vanished dream of a great future. Ronsard, who for a time was her literary tutor, saw her in her early widowhood wandering mournfully in the palace gardens at Fontainebleau, and commemorated the occasion in verse.

“ Partant, hélas ! de la belle contrée
 (Dont aviez eu le sceptre dans la main),
 Lorsque pensive et baignant votre sein
 Du beau crystal de vos larmes roulées,
 Triste, marchiez par les longues allées
 Du grand jardin de ce royal château
 Qui prend son nom de la beauté d'une eau.”

Charles IX succeeded to the throne, and the saying, “ Woe to the kingdom whose king is an infant ” was about to be fulfilled. The new king was a pathetic, a weird figure. Wayward, erratic, emotional and half demented, he seemed destined

to struggle against the pressure of his mother's baleful influence. The details of his physical appearance are unprepossessing and conflicting. As a child he was puny in appearance ; he grew tall, but was rather stooping in gait. His neck was slightly crooked, his face prematurely wrinkled. His eyes were malicious yet arresting, of a golden brown, his mouth weak, his nose aquiline. He was naturally impetuous, impatient, furious in his anger, but steadfast and firm in friendship.

Catherine, with the astuteness and corruption of the Italians, as well as the ambition of a woman and, moreover, of a queen, made use of every means of keeping him from his studies. She encouraged his love of pleasure, and surrounded him with courtiers who sought to prevent him from busying himself with affairs of State. She encouraged him in his absorbing love of the chase. In the end the young king gave himself up to his passions and left the reins of government in her hands. A description of Catherine at this time is from the pen of the Venetian envoy—

“ She is forty-three years old . . . of the keenest intellect . . . affable, capable as regards all affairs of business, politic above all. . . . She never loses sight of the king, nor permits any one else to sleep in his room. She knows that being a foreigner she is looked upon with envy and suspicion. . . . Her plans are profound and not easy to penetrate. She has few rules regarding her everyday mode

of living ; her appetite is enormous. She enjoys exercises, walking frequently, riding very actively ; she hunts with the king, her son, urges him into the thickets, and follows him with rare intrepidity. Her complexion is olive coloured and she is very stout. Her income is 300,000 francs per annum, double that of other dowager queens. She spends freely and liberally."

Catherine varied little in appearance for many years ; when she aged she grew heavier, clumsier and less prepossessing than before. She was tall and broad, her face round, her features large and colourless, her hair yellow and curly. Her lips were full and inexpressive. She developed a double chin. At first sight she might repel, but when she began to speak, and if she wished to please, she could be good company, loquacious and not without humour. It was only when roused into an expression of great feeling that her extraordinary powers and the consciousness of her evil proclivities made themselves felt.

Catherine loved the palace and usually visited Fontainebleau once a year. Many of her letters—voluminous letters, of which she sometimes wrote twenty in an afternoon—date from there. Sometimes she spelt the name Fontèneblayau. She was there for three months in the spring of 1561, the year following that in which the Assembly was held, and again in 1562 and 1563. In 1564 she made a long and important visit. When at the

palace she occupied the Pavillon des Poêles, next to the Pavillon des Peintures, the latter bearing on its frontage the name of King Charles IX and the date 1565. Her bedchamber in the Pavillon des Poêles was afterwards called the Appartements des Reines Mères.

Catherine had always taken a keen interest in the decorations of the palace during the reign of her father-in-law, François I ; more especially in his adoption of Italian forms of art, which she naturally loved. In Henri II's reign she would have been glad to continue the adornment of the apartments on the same lines, but in this she was hindered chiefly by Diane de Poitiers, who patronized all things French, and also by Henri's comparative apathy where reconstruction and improvement were concerned.

When finally she was her own mistress, she suggested and carried out certain changes and embellishments which were more practical than artistic. The Galeries de François I and de Henri II, planned in the reign of her father-in-law, were completed in her husband's lifetime. The great artists had finished their work, and were not commissioned afresh by Catherine. Nevertheless, she enriched the rooms with tapestries, statues and bronzes. She placed a replica of the equestrian figure of Marcus Aurelius at Rome in the Cour du Cheval Blanc, from which the court took its name, and which it retained long after the statue

disappeared in 1626. She went on with various structural alterations, adding a staircase and apartments. In the park she installed a farm and dairy in which she took a personal interest, and which she called My-Voye. She liked to collect ornaments and *objets d'art*, and she took an interest in architecture, but she had not the gift of carrying out any settled plan thoroughly, and the result of her labours was wanting in unity and importance.

Charles IX loved the palace as dearly as Catherine herself. Fontainebleau was not his birthplace, but the forest afforded him in his earliest childhood a romantic background for playing the imaginary hero, which appealed to his dreamy and poetic temperament. His memories of the palace, however, were not wholly pleasant. It was there that he was seized by the heads of the powerful Catholic party and carried back to Paris against his will. Catherine, alarmed by the reconciliation between the Duc de Guise, Montmorency and Saint-André, an alliance known as the Triumvirate, and strengthened by the addition of the King of Navarre, Lieutenant-General of the kingdom, began to favour the Calvinists, with Condé at their head, more and more overtly. Her power was seriously threatened, and to protect herself she called the Calvinists to arms and requested Condé to hasten to the capital. François de Guise, however, supported by a large army of nobles, made an almost royal entry into Paris, where he was received

with acclamations by the Catholics. Condé was obliged to give way before superior numbers. Bent on obtaining his revenge, he arranged with Catherine to seize the king, to strengthen his army and raise its prestige by placing it under the direct influence of royalty and to declare the followers of the Triumvirate to be rebels and traitors. The plan was ready, and Condé prepared to carry it out by getting possession of the king's person.

When Charles, who was at Fontainebleau, learnt that a large body of horsemen had surrounded the palace he gave way to a paroxysm of terror. His mother reassured him, saying that all would be well. Whilst she expected the arrival of the Protestants, however, the Catholics appeared first upon the scene. The Duc de Guise had scented Condé's scheme and went forth to meet the prince near Fontainebleau. There, as at Paris, the Catholics largely outnumbered the Protestants. As a result of a parley between the opposing forces, Condé withdrew for the second time. Whilst he marched upon Orleans, Guise's men entered the palace. The position of the Catholic army in Fontainebleau was strengthened by the possession of headquarters in the village. The Guises had acquired the Hotel of the Cardinal of Ferrara, a fine house situated at the palace gates and said to have been built by Serlio. Two thousand men formed a cordon round the palace. The Triumvirate was present, as well as the King of Navarre.

To the latter fell the privilege of presenting himself before Catherine, bearing an urgent message which originated with the Duc de Guise, and of which the purport was as follows : "The heretics being up in arms and in the field, it would not be safe for the king to remain in a residential palace which was not even guarded by walls or trenches, and that it had become the duty of himself, as Lieutenant-General, to escort his Majesty, in company with his royal mother, to Paris without delay." This act, audacious in its conception, was intended by the Catholics to preserve the safety of the throne, and at the same time to strengthen their religious influence.

At first Catherine had made light of the arrival of the Triumvirate at Fontainebleau, but she nevertheless contemplated fleeing from the palace by night to join Condé at Orleans. Having listened with apparent suavity to Navarre's speech, she remarked curtly that her son preferred to remain where he was. When she was told that this was out of the question, she departed from her calm attitude and mingled her tears with those which the young king was ready to shed. Montmorency, who was in command of the army, ordered the immediate departure of the Court, "and as Catherine's servants showed hesitation he threatened to flog those who refused to take down the king's bed because they feared his mother's wrath." Presently the carriages were

on their way to Melun, the queen accompanying her son, both giving way to uncontrollable grief. They journeyed in the midst of a guard of armed men, and after a march which lasted three days they entered Paris to the general delight of the people.

The king had been declared of age and was crowned on August 17, 1563. He was then fourteen. Catherine planned a grand tour for Charles and the Court : a kind of royal procession through the provinces, which was, among other purposes, to serve as a new bond between the people and their king, and merge many of the petty differences and complaints in universal rejoicing. But before this journey was commenced festivities were indulged in at home. The Court removed to Fontainebleau, reaching the palace on the last day of January, 1564, and among other diversions balls, ballets, feasts, hunts and tournaments took place. The Connétable acted as one of the hosts and invited Catherine, Charles and all the Court to a supper. Cardinal de Bourbon gave a banquet in his apartments, which were gorgeously decorated for the purpose. Afterwards a combat on horseback was fought in the court in front of his windows, a special amphitheatre being constructed in order that the spectators should have no difficulty in seeing the games to the best advantage. Catherine entertained her son and the chief retainers at My-Voye, which was sometimes called

"La Vacherie." Dinner at the farm was followed by a comedy in the Salle de Bal. On the following day the Duc d'Orléans held a reception in his hotel, after which a battle was fought between six nobles under the Duc de Retz and six under the Comte de Ringrave. The fighting, which was carried on in the courtyard of the hotel, was on foot, the weapons were darts and swords, and the whole made a most fascinating and graceful spectacle. The king thoroughly enjoyed these festivities. He gave a supper to the queen, nobles and courtiers after a tournament had been held near the large gates of the palace, close by the kennels.

Grand stands were erected for the occasion in the enclosure, and were intended to seat the nobles and ladies who took no active part in the spectacle. A large building had been constructed near by which was called the enchanted castle. The entrance was guarded by a giant and a dwarf, who refused to admit those who attempted to enter. The tournament was opened by four Marshals of France dressed alike in rich garments and mounted on beautiful horses. Beyond the enclosure six companies of soldiers were grouped, the men wearing the colours of the knights they served, of whom there were six in all. The first was the young prince, son of the Duc de Montpensier, the second the Duc de Guise, the third Prince of Mantua, the fourth the Duc de Nevers, the fifth

the Duc de Longueville, and sixthly the Comte de Ringrave. They rode into the field, circled round it and disappeared. Then followed six ladies on horseback, attired like nymphs, who, by virtue of their exceeding beauty, and their rich gowns sparkling with precious stones, riveted the gaze of every spectator. When they had made the round of the enclosure the ladies halted before the king's stand.

In the enchanted castle were six knights, the Prince de Condé at their head, who did battle for these ladies against the other six knights in single combat, each to each, and this brought the tournament to a close. The king's feast was laid in the Salle de Bal.

Another account of these festivities was given by Castelnau, who was present, and who described the scenes with slight variations. "The queen-mother likewise bore a part in these diversions, and gave very noble entertainments and concerts of music, by sirens beautifully represented in the canals of the garden, and several other agreeable inventions both of love and war," he wrote in his Memoirs, and he also mentioned "a delightful engagement between twelve Grecians and twelve Trojans, who, contending a great while about the love and beauty of a fair nymph, at length resolved to determine the dispute in a grand assembly of lords and ladies, who were to sit as judges of the victory." Castelnau acted the part of Glaucus in this "engagement," as well as in a

Tragi-Comedy in which the Duc d'Anjou, Margot, the Prince de Condé, the Duc de Guise, the Duchesses de Nevers and d'Usez, Duc de Retz and Villequier took part amongst others.

He gave a rather different account of the last tournament. "To finish these entertainments the king and duke, his brother, went the next day to walk in the garden, where they perceived a large enchanted tower, with a great number of fine ladies, that were kept prisoners by the furies, and guarded by two porters of gigantic size, who were only to be conquered by two of the most noble and illustrious princes in the world. Upon which the king and the duke, privately arming themselves, engage and overcome the giants; then entering the tower, have several other encounters, in which they prove victorious, dispel the magic, and so set the captive dames at liberty; upon which the tower becomes on a sudden all in flames."

On January 31, 1564, the king and the queen-mother held a special reception at Fontainebleau of the Ambassadors of the Pope, of the Emperor and of the King of Spain, who came with the intention of persuading them to carry out the articles of the Council of Trent, in as far as they dealt with the persecution of the Huguenots. Catherine replied to their demands in her usual evasive manner.

It was the day of luxury at Court. Catherine

loved to have about her person a large number of maids of honour. They were always gaily and beautifully dressed, at the queen-mother's expense, by no means a small tax upon her purse, for artists designed the Court dresses, and often chose to adorn them with gold ornament and precious stones. Catherine herself was richly and sumptuously attired in widow's black, with costly furs, laces and trimmings. She sat on a raised dais in the centre of her women, who rested on cushions and busied themselves with embroidery, or they hunted with her and walked with her in the forest. She walked so fast that it was difficult for any one to keep pace with her. After the walks and hunting there were feasts at which all the ladies were present. The queen-mother was enormously greedy. She ate a great deal of everything that was put before her, but if the dish happened to be a special favourite she ceased only when she could eat no more, a habit which naturally resulted in illness. When the meal was ended sometimes a dance was arranged. The centre of the room was cleared, the stools pushed back against the wall, and the Court ladies were expected to show unflinching grace and untiring energy. On other evenings ballets were the chosen form of amusement, or comedies and music arranged by Catherine or Charles, with the aid of Court poets and Court musicians. The nobles who were present at these functions were also richly garbed. It was

necessary for a courtier to have as many as thirty costumes, in order that he might not appear in the same one too frequently. They varied so much in colour and form that it was not always easy to describe them. It was not only the cut of the clothes which differed but the manner of wearing them. Sometimes a cloak was fastened high upon one shoulder whilst it dipped low on the other side, or one sleeve was left hanging open, whilst the other was buttoned up. Laces, jewels and feather plumes were worn according to the fashion of the hour, nay, of the moment. Charles was far more interested in hunting, sport and forging weapons than in matters of the toilet. He was content with a green satin dressing-gown in private or a doublet and hose of cloth of silver relieved by bands of orange-coloured satin. His riding-costume was of plain green cloth, and he wore a cap with six waving white plumes. His brother Henri, however, who succeeded him, took more interest in the fashions than in affairs of State. He was surrounded by painted puppets with frizzed hair and ridiculous garments, who were styled Mignons, and who, powdered and perfumed as they were, indulged in every kind of vice and frivolity into which the king could lead them. Fortunately they were rarely seen at Fontainebleau.

After a stay of forty-three days at the palace in 1564, Catherine, accompanied by the king and Court, set out on the provincial tour she had

planned, which lasted for eighteen months and touched upon Champagne, Burgundy, Languedoc, Guyenne and many other places, finishing up at Bayonne.

The end of the reign of Charles IX forms a record of dire happenings, struggle and massacre, but the more important events of the time happened elsewhere than at the pleasure palace. The gorgeous festivities which were held in celebration of the marriage of the king's sister, Margot, with the King of Navarre took place in Paris. The massacre of St. Bartholomew, which followed speedily upon it, did not affect Fontainebleau directly. A pet project of Catherine's was planned there in part, namely, that Elizabeth of England should marry one of her sons. "If," she wrote from Fontainebleau on Thursday, July 25, 1571, "unfortunately matters do not accord for my son [Anjou] as I could wish, I am resolved to try all efforts to succeed with my son Alençon, who would not be so difficult." The proposed bride was thirty-nine, her suitor not yet seventeen, but that was a mere bagatelle when compared with the other difficulties in the way of such a match, and which led to the idea being finally abandoned. Many of Catherine's plans came to nought; even that of governing France was now crumbling to pieces. In 1574 Charles IX died at the age of twenty-four, leaving his wife, Elisabeth, in his mother's charge. The pleasure palace had been

falling into disuse ; it was lying fallow as in the days before François I. Catherine no longer required a quiet spot where she could evolve her machinations. A new hand was needed to bring fresh life and beauty into the wilderness once more. Henri III, last of the Valois kings, cared little for Fontainebleau, and, though it was his birthplace, he rarely visited it. A tapestry is in existence which represents a hunt in the forest during his reign, but he was fonder of dancing than hunting, of verse-making than tournaments, of effeminate occupations of every kind rather than of manly sport. It is as well that he refrained from taking his lap-dogs and his mignons, his favourites and degenerate followers, with their love of fine feathers, feasting and wine-bibbing, to pollute the wholesome atmosphere of Fontainebleau. The queen-mother doted on this undeserving son who would have none of her counsel. To please him she continued to spend her substance on the riotous *fêtes* he loved, but they were held at Chenonceaux, at Saint-Germain, at Blois, anywhere but at Fontainebleau. Her power was gone, her spirit broken, friendless and weary she was left to die alone—one of the most hated women in Europe. On January 5, 1589, she breathed her last, and by her death was removed an awesome, unsympathetic, fanatic figure.

Henri III survived but a few months and fell by the assassin's knife. His chief claim to

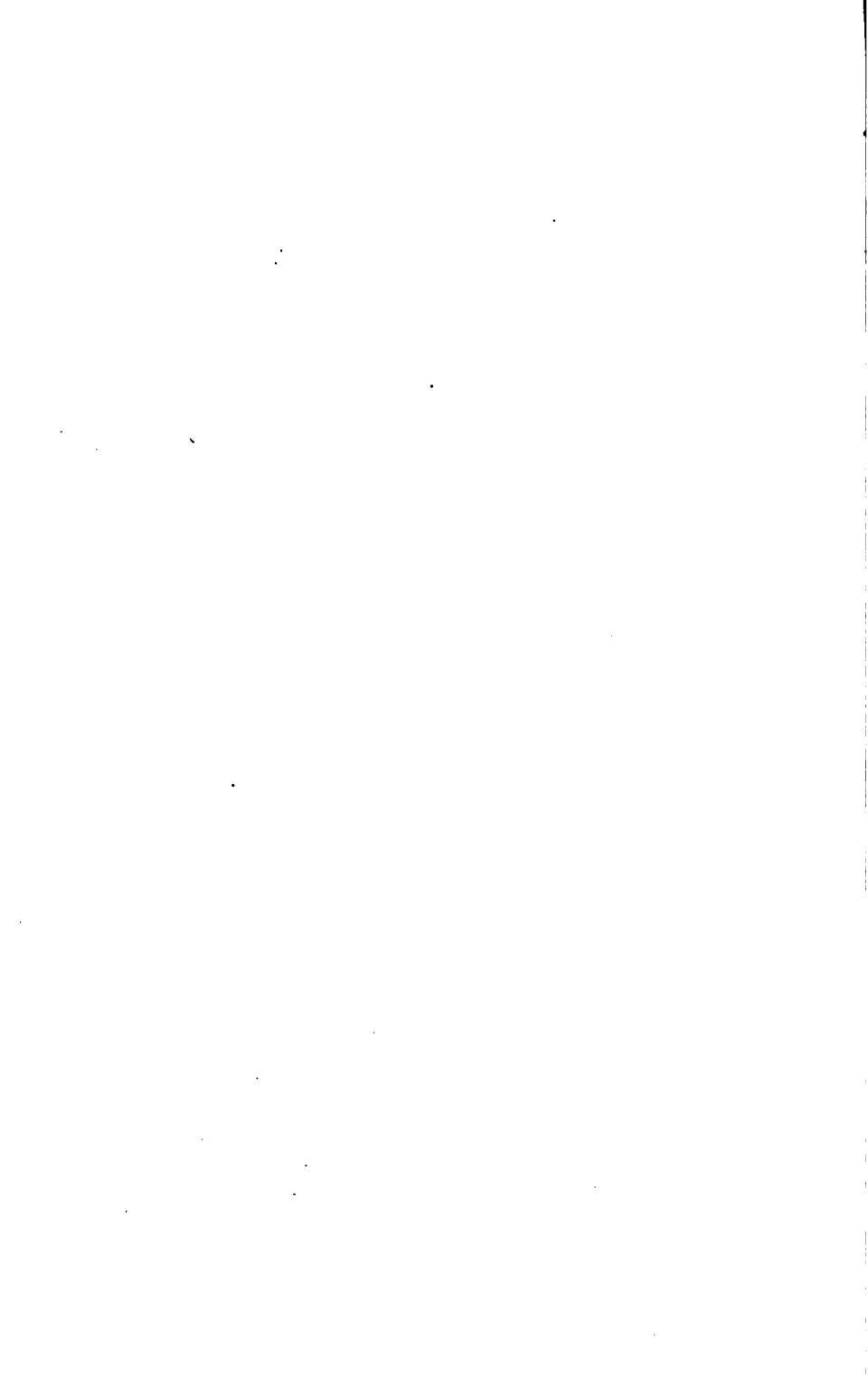
remembrance in connection with Fontainebleau is a "Complainte" to be found in a volume of poems by Desportes.

"Lieux de moi tant aimés, si doux à ma naissance,
Rochers qui des saisons dédaignez l'inconstance,
Frans de tout changement :
Effroyables déserts, et vous, bois solitaires,
Pour la dernière fois soyez les secrétaires
De mon dueil véhément.

.
Nymphes de ces forêts mes fidèles nourrices,
Tout ainsi qu'en naissant vous me fûtes propices.
Ne m'abandonnez pas
Quand j'achève le cours de ma triste aventure :
Vous fîtes mon berceau, faites ma sépulture,
Et pleurez mon trépas."



GABRIELLE D'ESTRÉES
(ALMOST A QUEEN)



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GABRIELLE d'ESTRÉES.

From a painting by Porbus, Dijon.

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CHAPTER V

GABRIELLE D'ESTRÉES

(ALMOST A QUEEN)

THE rule of the Valois was over, that of the Bourbons beginning, and Fontainebleau was to profit by the change of dynasty. During the period of uproar which accompanied the transition the Duc de Mayenne, ablest of Guise's brothers, head of the League, and rival of Henri de Navarre, was formally appointed Lieutenant-General of the Royal State and Crown of France. He was not slow to avail himself of the kingly prerogative to create marshals, to regulate the finances and dispose of the royal domains to his friends. Fontainebleau fell to the Sieur de Grammont, who was named Governor of the Palace. The honour was empty and short lived, for no sooner were the Wars of Religion ended, and Henri IV safely on the throne of a united France, than he required the palace for himself, and frequently took up his abode there. In the course of the improvements carried out during his reign he practically doubled the area of buildings and grounds. He constructed the Galerie de Diane, with Marie de Médicis figuring as the oft-portrayed goddess, the Galerie des Cerfs, scene

of the tragic death of Monaldeschi, the Pavillon des Dauphins and the Pavillon du Grand Chambellan. He enlarged the Cour Ovale, laid out the Cours des Princes and des Cuisines, placed five beautiful fountains in the king's garden, and a statue of Hercules by Michael Angelo in the Jardin de l'Étang, which was later called the Jardin Anglais. He had the gardens carefully cultivated, no small task owing to the sandy soil on which the palace stands. The story is told of him that one day when he was inspecting the progress of his flower-beds, in company with the Duc d'Épernon, they fell in with a gardener, to whom the king complained because there was not a better show of flowers. "Sire," replied he, "I cannot make anything grow in this soil." "Try planting Gascons," remarked the king, glancing maliciously at the Duc d'Épernon; "they spring up everywhere."

Moreover, Henri embellished the chapels and many of the galleries with paintings, sculptures, gilding, monograms and emblems. An imposing number of famous architects, artists and sculptors were engaged in remodelling and redecorating Fontainebleau. Nor did he neglect letters in his pursuit of art. He placed the library of the palace in the charge of Auguste de Thou, who was succeeded a few years later by Casaubon the scholar and philosopher.

Henri turned with relief from the exacting fatigues of civil war to the less onerous social

duties which it behoved him to perform as reigning sovereign of a realm at peace. He had the traditional love of sport which is common to the kings of France, and Fontainebleau became a centre for the chase; the kennels were extended and stocked afresh, the mews replenished with hawks and falcons, the walls of the galleries were decorated with the savage spoils of the hunt. One of the best-known legends of the forest of Fontainebleau is told in connection with the king's favourite diversion. Whilst hunting in the company of many princes and nobles the king was suddenly startled by the sound of horns, by the cries of huntsmen and the barking of dogs. At first these noises appeared to come from far away, almost immediately afterwards, however, they resounded close by, and every one was aware of them. Some of the company, slightly in advance of the king, saw a great black man among the bushes, an alarming spectre which cried in sepulchral tones, "M'attendez-vous?" or "M'entendez-vous?" or, according to other accounts, "Amendez-vous." The king, startled by this incident, caused the foresters and country people to be brought to him and inquired of them what they knew of this apparition. They informed him that they had frequently seen the black rider, whom they called the "Grand Veneur," accompanied by a pack of hounds which hunted at full cry, but never did any harm.

Dan gives Pierre Matthieu's version of the story, and adds, "I know what several authors narrate concerning the hunt of Saint-Hubert, which they declare is heard in various parts of the forest. Nor do I ignore what they say of the spectre called the 'Whipper,' which was supposed to appear in the time of Charles IX in the forest of Lyons, and which left the marks of the lash on several people. Nor do I doubt that demons may wander in the forests as well as in the air. But I know well that as regards the 'Grand Veneur' nothing is certain, least of all the circumstances in which, according to the reports of these authors, this phantom appears, and the words of which he makes use."¹

It is not improbable that the story of the "Grand Veneur," and of Herne the ghostly hunter in Windsor Forest, might be found to possess a common origin.

Tournaments and jousting were no longer in vogue, but tennis and pall-mall were favourite pastimes, and Henri constructed courts for these games, at both of which he excelled. Ladies played also, and this added to the king's enjoyment. In his day representatives of the fair sex were always welcome at Court. Even the sternest exigencies of warfare had never banished love from his heart. No sooner was political unrest allayed than he forgot all strife and wrangling in tenderer

¹ Dan, *Le Trésor des Merveilles de Fontainebleau*.

emotions. "What do you expect?" he replied to some of his friends who remonstrated with him on this subject; "after the misfortunes I have passed through, I need hours of happiness and ease, and I never breathe more freely than in the presence of my son and the mother of my son." He was indeed a fond and proud father of the small César, to whose mother, Gabrielle, he wrote letters from "our delicious deserts of Fontainebleau," pleading in every one that he could not live without her, that he was well but for the need of seeing her, and that she must hasten to him with all possible dispatch. But even these fond phrases did not satisfy him, and he burst into poetry which, he said, "represents my state of mind better than any prose could do." Modestly he disclaimed the authorship of the popular love song, and wrote in the letter which accompanied the verses, dated May 21, 1598, that he suggested, but did not actually compose them. As a matter of fact they were attributed to Bertaut, and put to music composed in the reign of Charles IX by Ducauroy. The first verse is as follows—

"Charmante Gabrielle
Percé de mille dards,
Quand la gloire m'appelle
Sous les drapeaux de Mars :
Cruelle departie !
Malheureux jour !
Que ne suis-je sans vie
Ou sans amour !"

The sentiment is sustained throughout and the fourth verse leads to a practical offer—

“Partagez ma couronne
Le prix de ma valeur,”

wherein lay the tragedy of Gabrielle's story, for she longed above everything to share Henri's throne, and devoted all her efforts to this end, fighting down opposition step by step, binding her royal lover ever more closely to her, circumventing Sully's wakeful fidelity to his master's interests, and, just as the prize had come within her grasp, falling the victim to a dread complaint which ended suddenly and fatally.

Born in 1571, Gabrielle was the daughter of Antoine d'Estrées and his wife Françoise, the latter being a member of the notorious family Babou de la Bourdaisière, of which the women were very fair and very frail. According to Saint-Simon's version seven of these women were known as the seven deadly sins, but Tallemant des Réaux gives the title to Gabrielle and her five sisters and brother. He quotes a doggerel, supposed to have been composed at her funeral, in which the six living deadly sins conduct the seventh to her last resting-place, performing this sad office to the tune of a *requiescat in pace*.

Whether Gabrielle was or was not endowed with her mother's light-mindedness—and opinions on this point differ considerably—she certainly in-

herited much of her grace, fascination and sweetness. Her biographers agree in ascribing these attributes to her, but they fail in bringing her vividly before the reader. The reason for this is not far to seek. In spite of her origin, her irregular upbringing and the uncongenial marriage into which she was forced when still a girl ; in the face, too, of the uncharitable gossip which went a long way in the direction of destroying her good name, Gabrielle possessed most of the domestic virtues. Her chief characteristics were common-sense, kindliness, womanliness, motherliness, and many of the gentler qualities which are difficult to draw distinctly because they blend one into the other, are harmonious and elusive and so rounded that they leave no irregular outlines, bold angles or strong contrasts of light and shade to stimulate the memory. Gabrielle was intelligent, but she had no great wit ; she was essentially amiable, and indulged in no destructive passions. This meekness of disposition endeared her doubly to the king, and once when she gave way to anger he rebuked her for losing sight of "the true motive which had determined him to attach himself to her."¹ She was ambitious because she wished to be a wife first, a queen afterwards ; because the falsity of her own and her children's position galled her and she longed to rectify it more than she desired to exercise personal power. D'Aubigné, who was often a harsh

¹ Sully, *Mémoires*.

critic, had only good to say of her. "The Duchesse de Beaufort used the power she had over the king with becoming modesty," he wrote. "It is marvellous that this woman, whose extreme beauty had nothing voluptuous about it, lived far more like a queen than a mistress for some years, and had very few enemies. The necessities of State were the only foes she had to encounter."¹ Nor did she lack influential friends of her own sex, amongst whom were Catherine of France, Duchesse de Bar, Henri IV's only sister, Louise de Coligny, daughter of the Admiral, and Louise de Lorraine, widow of Henri III. Madame Catherine was presented to her brother's mistress at Saumur in 1593. She gave Gabrielle a copy of her portrait, expressed her willingness to receive her as sister-in-law, and wrote a sincerely sympathetic letter to Henri on the occasion of Gabrielle's death, in which she spoke of the loss of a most perfect friend. Gabrielle possessed the kind of tact which disarmed those who had the best of reasons for harbouring a dislike to her, and whilst it is obvious that Sully worked ceaselessly in opposition to her interests, he never gave expression to any personal feeling against her as he did in the case of her successor, Henriette d'Entragues.

As regards her appearance, her portraits both in pen and pencil testify to her luxuriant and silky hair, her clear complexion, her blue eyes, set rather

¹ D'Aubigné, *Histoire Universelle*.

wide apart, and her well-shaped nose. Her contemporaries, Dreux de Radier in prose, and Guillaume de Sable in verse, express much the same opinion of her features. Perhaps Sainte-Beuve's description is the best. "She was white and fair," he wrote in his study of the Duchesse de Beaufort; "she had hair of a fine gold, slightly waved and massed high on her head, a high forehead, the *entr'œil* (as they called it then), broad and noble, a straight and regular nose, a small mouth, smiling and *pourprine*, an engaging and gentle physiognomy, with charm of outline. Her eyes were clear and tender, blue in colour, and quick to move. She was altogether womanly in her tastes, in her ambitions, even in her faults."¹

As a girl Gabrielle had many of the tastes of Diane de Poitiers, but she was fashioned in a far more feminine mould. Her early years were spent at the Château de Cœuvres, and she occupied herself in riding, hunting and flying the hawk, and because the times were unsettled she learned to fire the arquebuse, and could defend herself with a dagger if necessary. It was at Cœuvres that Henri first saw her when he was camping near Mantes in November 1590, or perhaps early in the following year. At this time Henri was thirty-seven years of age, and had been at the head of a nominal kingdom for about a year, but his subjects were disloyal and his realm divided. He was so poor that

¹ Sainte-Beuve, *Causeries du Lundi*, vol. viii.

he was in actual need of clothes ; he had led the rough life of the common soldier, and become lean, brown, his face lined with cares, and adorned with a ragged beard which was turning grey. To balance these disadvantages, however, he had a good stalwart figure, a keen eye, a martial air, and he was jovial, vigorous and popular with all. It was said of him that the women who saw him blushed, the children laughed, the old men revered him, and none resisted. Bellegarde, his equerry, who was much in love with Gabrielle, had the rashness to introduce her to the king. Henri had been separated from his wife for some time, and had tired of his mistress, Corisande ; he was ripe for a new adventure.

To see Gabrielle was to love her, to love her was to risk all to be near her. In the midst of his campaign, with danger threatening on every hand, he made a journey of seven leagues to visit her again. The *Histoire des Amours du Grand Alcandre* gives the most romantic version of Henri's gallantry. He rode four leagues on horseback, accompanied by five of his friends. When he was three leagues from Cœuvres he disguised himself as a peasant, carrying a sack full of straw on his shoulder, and set out alone and on foot to cover the rest of the distance. By means of this melodramatic arrival he thought he would carry all before him, but the reception awaiting him was very different to that which he had pictured. Gabrielle and her sister

Juliette were alone in one of the galleries of the château. He appeared very ridiculous in the eyes of the former, and she received him coldly, and said to his face that she thought him too ugly to look upon. Then she abruptly left the room, while her sister endeavoured to excuse her extraordinary conduct. "Thus," concluded the chronicler, "this perilous journey bore little fruit, save to plunge those into despair who knew not whither the king had gone."

It is not altogether easy to reconcile this story of Gabrielle's ill-humour with what is known of her in later years. The probability is that she was really in love with Bellegarde and did not at first look upon the king's advances with any degree of approval. Moreover, her father was strenuously opposed to any such *liaison* and forced her into an early marriage with M. de Liancourt, a gentleman of Picardy. All kinds of stories were told about this marriage. Some said Henri himself had a hand in arranging it, others that Liancourt offered himself in the *rôle* of complaisant husband. It was whispered that Henri had promised to go to the bride's deliverance on the wedding-day, but that the exigencies of warfare hindered him from carrying out his plans. The only thing that seems reliable is that Gabrielle herself protested strongly against the coercion of her will, but that the marriage, which was a marriage only in name, took place in spite of her objection, and that if it was intended

to be a concession to appearances it was a signal failure.

After her marriage Gabrielle lived for a short time at the Château de Liancourt, but she was with Henri throughout the siege of Chartres, and was chaperoned by her aunt, Mme. de Sourdis, who remained with her till her death.

A year or two later Gabrielle's position as the king's mistress became secure. His love for her gathered force as the days passed. She was soon his devoted companion, sharing his joys and his difficulties. The difference of eighteen years in their respective ages seemed no bar to absolute sympathy between them. Her eldest boy, César, was born at Coucy on June 7, 1597. The same year two events occurred which also added to the security of her position. The unrest which still obtained in the country induced Henri, not for the first time, to abandon his religion and be converted to Roman Catholicism. This action, *le saut périlleux*, as he called it, had an enormous influence in consolidating the kingdom and his position at the head of it. Whilst he meditated upon this important step in his career, Gabrielle remained with him, and threw her sympathy and influence into the balance, proving herself to be both broad-minded and far-seeing in her advice to him to seize this opportunity of overcoming the opposition of his Catholic subjects.

In September of that year Henri entered Paris

in state. Mme. de Liancourt preceded him in a magnificent open litter, loaded with pearls and jewels, glittering so powerfully that the lights of the torches paled before them, and wearing a black satin robe all puffed with white.¹

From this day onward Gabrielle was received by every one. She was almost on the footing of a queen. Negotiations were already pending for the annulment of her marriage, judgment being pronounced in January, 1595. Her son César was immediately legitimized, and she herself became Marquise de Monceaux and *maîtresse en titre*. Henri began to think of taking definite steps to divorce Queen Margot, by whom he had no children.

Although Henri never allowed his mistress to interfere in the business of the State he did not object to avail himself of any personal influence that Gabrielle was able to exert socially, and, according to De Thou, she had a hand in bringing about the submission of the Duc de Mayenne, "the man who," it was said, "could make neither peace nor war." He was granted an interview by the king at Monceaux, where Gabrielle played the hostess, receiving her guest at the door of the château. He was a very stout gentleman indeed and had three squires to help him off his horse and conduct him to the king. Two years later she performed the office of hostess to Président Groulard, who

¹ L'Estoile, *Journal du règne de Henri IV.*

left an account of his visit to Monceaux. "After supper," he wrote, "the king asked me to take a couple of turns in the long allée. He held the duchess by one hand and I was at his other." Gabrielle had by that date been created Duchesse de Beaufort.

The same writer left an account of Gabrielle's visit to Rouen in 1596, where the king held the Assembly of Notables. Whilst Henri made his speech she was concealed behind a curtain, so that she could hear every word without being seen. The king asked her what she thought of the proceedings, to which she replied that she had never listened to anything better; although she had been surprised to hear him say he would put himself in their hands for guidance. "Ventre-saint-gris," replied the king, using his favourite oath. "You are quite right. I meant I would put myself in their hands—with a sword in my own."

Early in 1597 Henri left his mistress and set out for Amiens to save that city from the grasp of Spain. As soon as it was possible Gabrielle was to follow him thither. It was arranged that Sully should meet and escort her to the king, and on the way a misadventure occurred which might well have ended fatally. It threw Sully into great agitation. Although from that time onwards he made it his business to check Gabrielle's ever-increasing power at every possible turn, the fact

that harm might have come to her whilst in his charge was a danger to himself he did not care to contemplate. It happened that Gabrielle was travelling in a litter, behind which rolled the unwieldy coach which carried her women. In the train were a number of mules laden with baggage, and the whole made quite an imposing cavalcade. Sully was riding some seven or eight hundred paces in front of the litter. It was arranged that they should meet the king near Clermont, but before they reached that place, and on a very narrow road, the horses took fright, the mules stampeded, and the coach dashed forward almost upon the litter. "Mme. de Liancourt, alarmed by the noise, looked out and screamed aloud," wrote Sully. "I also turned back, and, trembling at the danger in which I saw this lady and her attendants, without being able to assist them on account of the distance between us, cried to La Fond, 'Ah, friend, the women will be dashed in pieces. What will become of us? and what will the king say?'"¹

Fortunately the axle-tree of the coach gave way and the vehicle stopped dead just before it passed the litter, the horses breaking their traces and galloping on without doing any harm. Mme. de Liancourt was saved almost by a miracle. As soon as they met the king Sully told him what a narrow escape his mistress had had. "While I

¹ Sully, *Mémoires*.

was relating the adventure," he continued, "I observed him attentively, and saw him turn pale and tremble. By these emotions, which I never perceived in him in the greatest dangers, it was easy to guess the violence of his passion for this lady."

Peace was established generally in France after the signing of the Edict of Nantes in 1598, and of the Treaty of Vervins, which immediately followed upon it. Gabrielle was thought to have exerted her influence in hastening the king's decision to secure religious toleration. The Edict gave more freedom to the Huguenots and consolidated the privileges already enjoyed by them. Nearly a century later, in 1685, the Revocation of this Edict was signed at Fontainebleau by Louis XIV, and upon Mme. de Maintenon fell some of the blame, whether rightly or wrongly, of instigating the king to pursue this ill-considered step.

No sooner was Henri IV firmly on the throne of a united France than he desired above all else to secure the succession. His affection for his mistress had grown steadily during the unsettled years, and had survived the severest proofs to which it had been subjected. Rumour declared that he intended to marry the woman who had given him a son. The childless Queen Margot, threatened with divorce, could hardly doubt who was to succeed her should the dissolution of her marriage become absolute. The most she could do was to express

her objection to any proceedings being instituted against her unless she received assurance that only a woman of royal birth should be married to the king in her place.

There is a fine scene between Henri and Sully, in which the king gave expression to his desires concerning Gabrielle in order to gauge the extent of public feeling on the question of his second marriage. He began by bringing under review the various European princesses who were eligible to become his wife. He demanded that the one chosen should be possessed of seven qualities : beauty, prudence, gentleness, wit, fruitfulness, riches and royal birth. None of the women he named satisfied him in all of these particulars. Sully tried to make him see the matter from a less exacting standpoint. He reduced the seven desirable qualities to three. "Since you confess," said Henri, "that the lady whom I marry ought to be of an agreeable temper, beautiful in her person, and able to bring forth children, reflect whether you know no person in whom these essential qualities are united." Sully saw the trend of the king's remarks clearly, and gave an intentionally indefinite reply. "And what would you say," continued the king, "if I should name one who, I am fully convinced, possesses these three qualities? Confess that they meet in my mistress ; not that it is my intention to marry her, but I desire to know what you would say if, being unable to meet

another of whom I could approve, I should one day take it into my head to make her my wife."

Sully, who had temporized at the beginning of the discussion and affected to believe that the king was jesting, when it came to this plain speech found it necessary to enumerate the many complications and difficulties to which Henri would lay himself open if he determined to carry out the impolitic marriage he contemplated. The astute minister saw that danger menaced France, and did everything possible to avert it. The discussion between king and counsellor lasted for three hours and formed one stage in the keen and long-drawn struggle between Gabrielle and the king's inclination on the one hand, and Sully and good policy on the other. It was but a short while before the affair assumed an aspect far more acute. Gabrielle obtained the king's consent to the baptism of her second son, Alexandre, in 1598, with the ceremonies peculiar to the baptism of the legitimate offspring of France, and with the title of Monsieur, which was tantamount to regarding him as the brother of the heir to the Crown. The Comte de Soissons was the child's godfather; Diane de France, illegitimate daughter of Henri II, the godmother. Elated by this acknowledgment of her son's high estate Gabrielle "began to assume all the airs of a queen." She was encouraged in this presumptuous attitude by several supporters, among them Mme. de Sourdis, Chiverny, who plainly declared in his

Memoirs that the king had decided to marry her, and Fresne, whose duty it was to draw up the warrant for payment of the expenses incurred at the baptism. When the warrant came in due course into the Comptroller's hands he refused to let it stand, ordering it to be redrawn, omitting the title of Monsieur, etc., and reducing the expenditure, at the same time declaring sternly to Gabrielle's supporters, "Know that there are no children of France!" He showed the objectionable document to the king, who, to keep up appearances, simulated anger, and remarked, "Such people are very malignant and put difficulties in the way of those who serve me faithfully. They bring a warrant to Rosny¹ intending that he should offend me by passing it, or my mistress by refusing it." Then he advised Sully to make his peace with Gabrielle. She received him in great anger, saying that he had imposed upon the king and made him believe that black was white. The struggle between these two was nearing its climax.

Sully again appealed to the king, and together they returned to Gabrielle's apartments. Henri reproached his mistress for the course of action she had taken, for the bad counsel to which she had listened, and for her loss of dignity and the gentleness which was the chief cause of his affection. Then he praised Sully's fidelity and spoke of his unlimited

¹ The Duc de Sully, Comptroller of Finances.

confidence in him. At this Gabrielle burst into a passion of tears and reproached her royal lover, crying out that she was being sacrificed to one of his valets. Henri was roused to anger, and lost his patience. "By Heaven ! madame," he cried, "you presume too much. I see whither this outburst is likely to lead. You wish to prevail upon me to banish a servant whose assistance I cannot do without. If I were reduced to the necessity of choosing which of you I would part with, I would rather do without ten mistresses such as you than one such servant as he is."¹

Sully, from whose Memoirs this version of the story comes, has been accused of exaggerating the facts. Certainly there is little likelihood that Henri, who at the time of this encounter was contemplating marriage with his mistress, should have spoken to her in such coarse terms. Although the affair ended in a general reconciliation between the three most nearly concerned in it, it is difficult to believe that Sully, who saw himself nearing the verge of defeat, should have entertained any more amicable sentiments towards the woman who was doing her best to render futile the work of many years.

The rumour that the king was to marry the Duchesse de Beaufort grew more and more prevalent. She was always with the king, at Fontainebleau or elsewhere. Even Sully confessed

¹ Sully, *Mémoires*.

to his wife that "the cord was holding and would do its work *unless it should break*." Gabrielle herself declared openly, "Only God or death can hinder me from becoming queen." She consulted all the available astrologers, and because their predictions were adverse, spent whole nights in grief and tears. In the early months of 1599 the dissolution of Henri's marriage was so near accomplishment that actual preparations for his wedding with Gabrielle were taking place. Even her gowns were ready. They were exquisitely fashioned. One was of silver cloth, trimmed with silver lace and edged with incarnadine satin, with large sleeves *à l'Espagnole*, trimmed with incarnadine satin and silver embroidery in which the king's monogram and her own S crossed by an arrow¹ were worked into the design. This gown was worth 700 crowns. Another of rich incarnadine velvet was embroidered with fine gold and silver and was priced at 1000 crowns; there was one of green satin, another of black satin, with open sleeves and rich point lace, still another of the peculiar brown colour called *pain bis*. A riding-habit was worth 200 crowns, and was made of green satin; for when riding, which she did astride, Gabrielle affected green as much as Henri did grey. A cape and a riding-skirt for

¹ The S and arrow or *trait* made a pun upon her name Estrées. The design is found in the Salon de Louis XIII at Fontainebleau.

wearing on horseback was made of zizolin-coloured satin, embroidered with silver, and with silver trimming above an edging of green satin. The cape lined with gauffered green satin, and over the facing of the sleeve buttonholes worked in silver. And the said skirt lined with taffeta of zizolin colour, and a hat also of zizolin-coloured taffeta, trimmed with silver. It is impossible to enumerate all her rich clothes and her gorgeous jewels. Most of the latter were found after her death at Fontainebleau and became Crown jewels. They belonged later to Marie de Médicis who promptly put some of them in pawn. There were bracelets and collarettes, chains and rings worth in all some 85,000 crowns. One necklace was made of sixteen jewels, seven of which represented the various planets ; another was of thirty-two pieces, eight of which formed the joint monogram of Henri and Gabrielle. Among the gems was a beautiful diamond ring used by the king at his coronation ; it was found at the time of Gabrielle's death in the rooms of her aunt, Mme. de Sourdis.

Every day Gabrielle's position was becoming more and more secure. When she drove out a captain of the guards rode beside her litter or coach. She slept in the queen's apartments at the Louvre on a bed upholstered in the royal colours. It had four solid carved pillars hung with crimson velvet and trimmed with gold and silver. The canopy of the bed was of the same rich material ;

the curtains and the chairs matched the shade in silk. She now had a *lever* and a *coucher* at which her friends and relatives presided.

Nothing was wanting but the final decision of the Pope in the matter of the king's divorce to make it possible for her to become Queen of France in name as well as in position. And then destiny stepped in and the prize she had longed for with all her soul became a thing of nought. Gabrielle lay dead, and the crimson-decked bed was transformed into a bier on which she lay in state.

She parted from the king for the last time at Fontainebleau, where they had been staying shortly before Easter, as Henri's custom was. Bassompierre was there, and had been received in great intimacy by the king, who set him to play cards with Gabrielle whilst he himself went hunting. As Holy Week approached, Henri became anxious lest Gabrielle's presence should compromise him in the eyes of the people, and he particularly desired that at this juncture of affairs both he and his mistress should stand high in the favour of his subjects. Therefore he expressed a wish to spend Easter alone at Fontainebleau while she performed her devotions in Paris, and he made every arrangement for her safe conduct to the city, in the charge of Bassompierre, who was to go with her by boat. He even suggested facetiously that they might pass the time by playing cards on the way. He

himself accompanied Gabrielle as far as Melun, where they parted in great grief and tribulation, almost as though the tragedy which was to be enacted within two or three days was already making itself felt.

“Mme. de Beaufort,” wrote Sully, “spoke to the king as though for the last time. She begged him to look after her children, her house at Monceaux, and her servants. The king listened to her forebodings, and instead of comforting her gave way to sympathetic grief. Again they took leave of one another, but once more a secret emotion drew them to each other’s arms.” At length the king was separated from his mistress almost by force and prevailed upon to return to Fontainebleau.

Gabrielle’s destination was the house of Zamet, the financier. Sully went to visit her there almost immediately on her arrival in Paris, and then sent his wife to see her. To this lady Gabrielle showed the “civilities which are practised between equals, and with the air of a queen told her she might come to her *coucher* and *lever* whenever she pleased.” No wonder that Sully’s wife predicted that an important change was about to take place in the fortunes of the duchess.

Gabrielle, who was shortly expecting her confinement, desired to attend Tenebræ at the little church of Saint-Antoine, and set out in a litter accompanied by M. de Montbazon, Captain of the Guards, and followed by the Princesse de

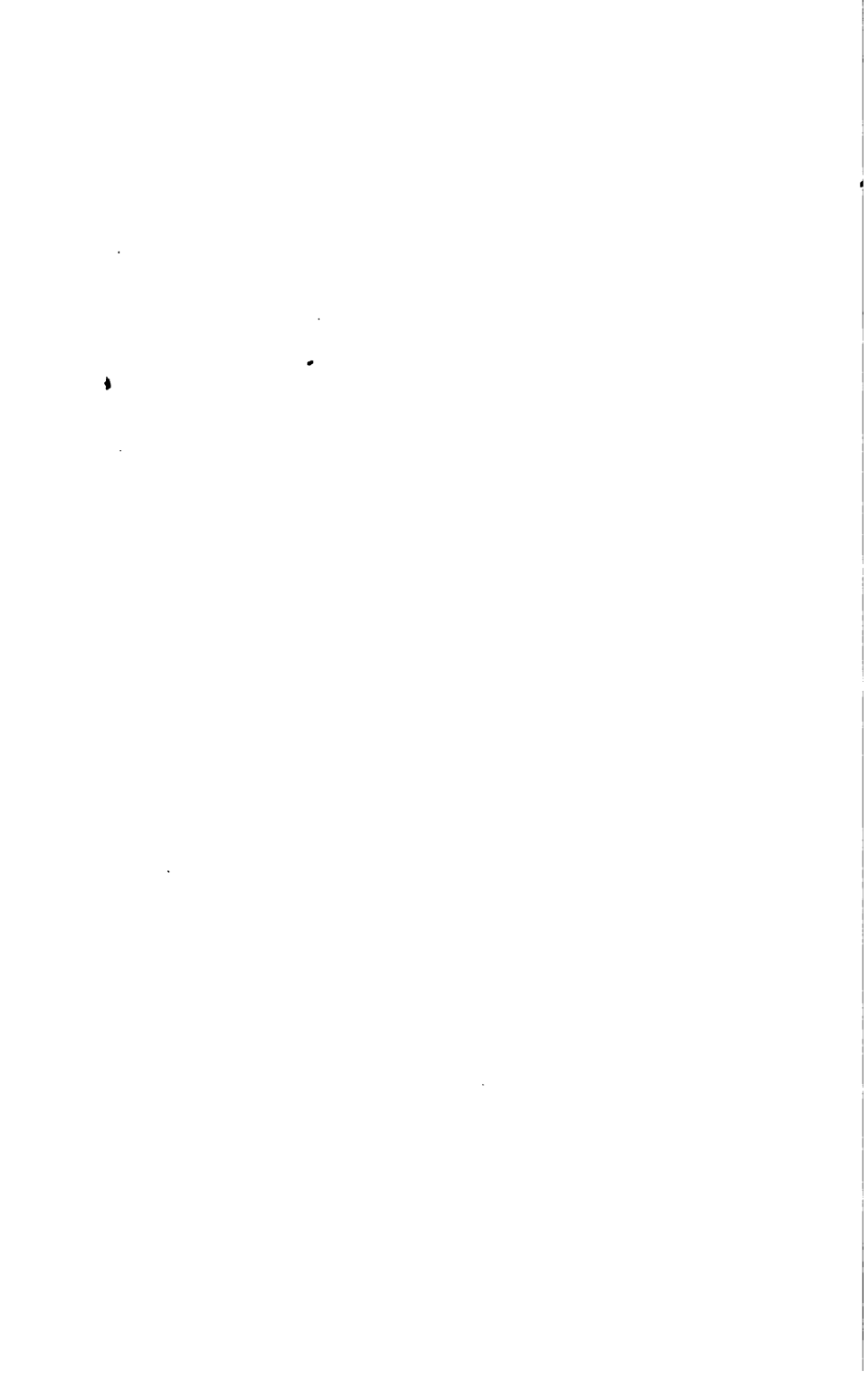
Lorraine and a number of ladies in carriages, as well as an escort of archers. On her return from the ceremony she was seized with convulsions at Zamet's house, and begged to be removed to the apartments of Mme. de Sourdis. For two days she was in the throes of a dreadful disease, which left her unrecognizably disfigured. Her death was announced even before she ceased to breathe, and suspicions were rife that she had been poisoned. D'Aubigné speaks of foul play, but Chiverny, who was devoted to her interests, mentions no such probability.

The Maréchal d'Ornano was one of the first to receive the authentic news of Gabrielle's death. Everything that could be done to hinder the king from coming to Paris was done. The marshal, accompanied by Bassompierre, set out for Fontainebleau. They met the king at La Saussaye, near to Villejuif. Henri was riding at full speed. No sooner had he caught sight of the messengers than he guessed their news, "which caused him to show great outward grief." It almost required force to make him enter the carriage which was to bear him back to Fontainebleau. When he reached the palace he betook himself to the Pavillon du Jardin des Pins to give way to excessive sorrow, augmented by the sight of the little Duc de Vendôme, Gabrielle's eldest son.

Presently Sully was summoned to the palace to relieve the king's utter dejection. According to

his own account he was divided between grief for the king's loss and joy for the country's gain ; but at all events he thought it well to give vent to an exhortation on the virtue of resignation to the agitated king, who could do nothing but pace up and down the gallery in which he received him. There is more of the politician than the friend in Sully's diplomatic remark that Henri " by this transitory sorrow would purchase his release from a thousand future anxieties." There is more of the triumphant antagonist than of the politician in his reflection to his wife : " You will neither go to the duchess's *coucher* nor to her *lever*—for she is dead ! "

**MARIE DE MÉDICIS AND HENRIETTE
D'ENTRAGUES
(A QUEEN AND HER RIVAL)**



CHAPTER VI

MARIE DE MÉDICIS AND HENRIETTE D'ENTRAGUES

(A QUEEN AND HER RIVAL)

HENRI remained at Fontainebleau to mourn the loss of Gabrielle d'Estrées, whose funeral had been attended with all the pomp and ceremony usual to that of a princess of the blood. The king wore black mourning for a week, the royal purple for twelve. He kept two or three intimates with him, among them Bassompierre, to whom he said, "You were the last one near my mistress, remain near me also to speak of her." He had been faithful à la Henri le Grand to Gabrielle during her lifetime; he was not faithful for long after her death. It was reported that he was wooing Henriette d'Entragues within three weeks, but this statement was more malicious than justified.

He was, it is true, still wearing mourning when he first succumbed to her powers of fascination, but he did not give her a promise of marriage until nearly the end of the year, and Gabrielle had died in April, the very month of which he had written in a letter to her "to spend April away from one's mistress is truly not to live." Like

many of Henri's sentimental expressions, this phrase might have been addressed with equal appropriateness to several women. His letters to the mistress who succeeded Gabrielle were quite as passionate but far less romantic. The latter awoke in him a purer affection than any other, and it was to her and to her alone that it was possible for him to frame the poetic thought regarding her portrait: "I am a competent judge of it, having painted you myself in all your perfection in my soul—in my soul, in my heart, in my eyes."

Henri was at Fontainebleau then, still mourning Gabrielle, and incidentally awaiting the final formality which would render valid his divorce from Queen Margot, when his attention was first drawn to Henriette. His courtiers could not say enough concerning their admiration of her beauty, her wit, her sparkling sprightliness. They did not add that she was a shameless coquette, a siren of the most heartless type, who would ruin his peace of mind and keep him tethered at her feet, forgetful not only of honour but of common honesty. No woman could have afforded a more striking contrast to the amiable Gabrielle; she was as passionate and materialistic as the latter had been loving and *spirituelle*.

Henriette was the daughter of François de Balzac, Comte d'Entragues, and of his wife Marie Touchet the ex-mistress of Charles IX, who was mother, before her marriage, of the Comte

d'Auvergne. Born in 1579, Henriette was brought up to make the most of her opportunities in life. Her record was one of sordid self-seeking and insatiable ambition without a vestige of real nobility in her character to balance these objectionable traits. In the first instance she sold herself dearly, demanding one hundred thousand crowns as the price of her favours. Moreover, she exacted a written promise of marriage from the king as a guarantee that his intentions were honourable. Had it been necessary, in order to further his designs, Henri would willingly have written her a promise to place the whole kingdom, if not the whole world, at her feet for her to trample on. She could not have used any such contract to better effect. As usual Sully had to bear the brunt of the king's indiscretion. One morning at Fontainebleau, when Henri was ready to start out hunting, he called his minister and showed him the document. "While I was reading this paper," wrote Sully in his *Memoirs*, "every word of which was like the stab of a poniard, Henri sometimes turned aside to conceal his confusion, and sometimes endeavoured to gain over his confidant by condemning and excusing himself by turns; but my thoughts were wholly employed upon the fatal writing. The clause of marrying a mistress, provided she bore him a son in the space of a year (for it was conceived in these terms) appeared indeed ridiculous, and plainly of

no effect." Sully returned the paper in silence to the king, who asked him to speak freely, assuring him that nothing he could say would give offence. Acting on this promise, Sully took the document out of the king's hands and tore it into shreds. "Morbleu!" ejaculated Henri. "You must be mad." "So I am, sire," replied Sully quietly, "and I would to God I were the only madman in France!"

The well-merited rebuke aroused the king's passion. He darted from the gallery in which the interview had taken place and wrote a copy of the promise in his study. He left Fontainebleau immediately for Malesherbes, where Henriette awaited him.

In spite of the promise to Mlle. d'Entragues, negotiations were soon pending for the king's marriage with Marie de Médicis. "We come, sire, from marrying you," said Sully unexpectedly one morning, and Henri responded in utter weariness and indifference, "Pardieu, there appears to be no remedy. If for the good of my kingdom I must marry, I must."

This decision resulted in serious intrigues which centred round the king's mistress and in which several nobles were involved who, having helped Henri to conquer France, looked for more reward than they had received at his hands. Chief among these malcontents was Charles Emmanuel, Duc de Savoie, who ventured into France because he

wished to persuade the king to allow him to retain certain lands that Henri had ordered him to give up, and also because he did not look with favour upon the Médicis marriage. He sought an interview with the king at Fontainebleau, where he arrived on December 13, 1599, and where he was very well received. The king himself conducted the duke over the buildings and gardens of the palace, and showed him his favourite pictures and other works of art. Several days were spent in outdoor sport and hunting, but this hospitality did not in the least mean that the king was prepared to meet his guest's demands, quite the reverse. Realizing this, the dissatisfied Duc de Savoie allied himself with the Maréchal de Biron, the Comte d'Auvergne, the Ducs de Bouillon and d'Épernon besides others, who were all prepared to incite the king's mistress to claim the rights of Henri's promise, working on her greed and her ambition in order to prevent the marriage with Marie de Médicis. Henri, seeing that this alliance was inevitable, made one futile effort to recover the compromising document. He wrote to Henriette from Fontainebleau on April 21, 1600, demanding its return without fail, and sent a second note on the same day to her father by messenger, who was told to wait for the document and not to return without it. Henriette could afford to laugh, and to send the king's messenger away empty-handed. Her position was growing stronger every day. At

the same time that of the Duc de Savoie became more and more dangerous, and he thought it well to leave France, Henri pursuing him with an army, and followed in his turn by the exacting Henriette. She over-reached herself by this policy, however, and materially weakened her position by giving birth to a dead son at Lyons. From that city she mournfully returned by easy stages to Paris, whilst Henri, who was married by proxy at Florence on October 5, 1600, awaited the arrival of his wife. No sooner had he become acquainted with her than he left her alone at Lyons and posted off to Henriette at Verneuil.

While these fertile seeds of bickering and intrigue at Court were being sown, Fontainebleau was the scene of a very different kind of dispute, which bore on the religious affairs of the country. A bone of contention between the Roman Catholics and Protestants was a book on the Eucharist written by Du Plessis Mornay, and entitled *Instructions de la Sainte-Euchariste*. Sully dispatched the volume, which was an attack upon the Mass, to the Abbé du Perron, Bishop of Évreux, one of the ablest theologians of the day, who severely condemned the work. "Not that I would accuse M. du Plessis of insincerity," he wrote, "but he has been misled by careless compilers." Nothing would satisfy both parties except that a conference should be called to verify the quotations alleged to be false. Sully tried to save Du Plessis Mornay

from the risk of exposure, but in vain. "The book is my child, sir," remarked the accused, "and I wish to defend it. I entreat you not to interfere, for you have not reared it as I have."

The king welcomed this opportunity of proving his orthodoxy which, since his conversion, might well have been called into question, and held the conference in the Salle du Conseil on May 4, 1600. Father Dan gives a detailed account of the meeting, and mentions those who were present.¹ The king was seated at one end of a porphyry table with the Bishop of Évreux on his right and Du Plessis Mornay on his left. A most distinguished company of princes, officers of State, archbishops, bishops and nobles was gathered together, among them the Archbishop of Lyons, the Bishops of Nevers, of Beauvais and of Castres, and the Ducs de Vaudemont, de Nemours, de Mercœur, de Mayenne, d'Elbeuf and d'Aiguillon.

The Assembly being seated, a copy of the condemned book was placed on the table before the king. A searching inquiry into the authenticity of sixty of the impugned passages was begun, and resulted in the disgrace of Du Plessis Mornay, whose defence was weak and halting. The king expressed immense admiration for the brilliancy and learning of the Bishop of Évreux. Turning to Sully he inquired facetiously what he thought of his pope, for Du Plessis Mornay was looked

¹ Dan, *Le Trésor des Merveilles de Fontainebleau*.

upon as the supreme head of the Protestant Party. "I think, sire," responded Sully, "that he is more of a pope than your Majesty imagines, for he has just now given the Cardinal's hat to M. d'Évreux."

The following day Du Plessis Mornay pleaded illness and left Fontainebleau before the conference was continued. He nursed his mortification in concealment at Saumur. Du Perron was made a cardinal as foreseen by Sully, and several influential Protestants, among them Président Canaye, were converted to Roman Catholicism.

The rivalry between Marie de Médicis and Henriette d'Entragues, which was to continue in a more or less acute form until the end of the reign, began almost immediately upon the queen's arrival in Paris. Her apartments at the Louvre were not ready for her reception, and she was at first entertained at the residence of Cardinal de Gondî. Here she was soon surrounded by friends. "All the ladies of the principal houses of France and of the most honourable of the city came to kiss her hand and bow before her," and who should appear among them but the fair and perfidious Henriette in charge of the old Duchesse de Nemours. The moment was full of dramatic possibilities. The king, desirous no doubt of paving the way to tolerant, if not amicable relations, took the burden of the introduction upon himself, saying, "This lady has been my mistress, she desires now to be your personal servant." The queen's eye flashed

and her lips trembled, but she uttered not a word. Henriette, mocking and defiant, gave her but a scant curtsy, whilst Henri, placing his hand roughly upon her arm, forced her almost to the ground. The situation is typical of the relations these three were to assume in the future : Marie was to remain scornful, Henriette impertinent, and Henri engrossed in his endeavour to suppress the insuppressible.

Marie de Médicis at the time of her marriage was twenty-seven years old. She was, according to Michelet, "a tall and stout woman, very fair-skinned, who, except for fine arms and a beautiful throat, was thoroughly vulgar." Certainly Henriette's bewitching grace, her mocking wit and inexhaustible fund of repartee contrasted to her great advantage with the healthy and homely beauty, the stolidity and slow intelligence and the somewhat morose temper of Marie de Médicis. When it came to a question of vulgarity, however, Henriette was quite capable of being first in the field. She improved upon Henri's title of "Vert-Galant" by calling him "Capitaine Bon-Vouloir" ; she spoke of the queen as "your fat banker's daughter," and the name she used for herself is best left in oblivion. She continued to regard Marie as a usurper, herself as queen. "The Florentine is your mistress," she repeated over and over again to Henri, "I am your real wife," and when matters came to a worse pitch because queen

and mistress both bore Henri a son, she insulted the queen, whom she met in the park, by approaching her, with the child, and remarking, "Behold our two dauphins, madam ! Mine is far finer than yours." Marie boxed her ears for this insult and complained to Henri. But a box on the ears was not enough to daunt Henriette, secure in her new title of Marquise de Verneuil. When the children were a few years old Henri wished them to be brought up together and educated for a time at Fontainebleau, but the mistress was even more strenuously opposed to this than the queen. "Let the Florentine keep her bastard," she declared angrily, "and I will keep my dauphin. I will not have my son brought up with bastards."

Thus, proud, vindictive, eaten up with jealousy and ambition, Henriette continued to aspire to be Queen, and at every opportunity waved the fateful promise of marriage in the king's face. Henri, however, with the succession secured by the birth of a legitimate heir, assumed a calmness which he could hardly have felt had he realized the series of conspiracies to which his actions had given rise and which resulted in several attempts upon his life.

The dauphin, soon to be crowned as Louis XIII, had been born at Fontainebleau on September 27, 1601, in the oval room specially prepared for such occasions and furnished with a fine bed of crimson velvet trimmed with gold. The nurse,

Mme. Boursier, who added a taste for literature to her other accomplishments, told in her account of the event the pleasure she took in concealing the child's sex from its father. Henri, almost overcome by his agitation, begged her not to deceive him, and when he knew for certain that the baby was a boy "he lifted his eyes to heaven, and with clasped hands thanked God, tears as large as peas rolling down his cheeks." The queen fainted with joy when she was told the news, but Henri, quite regardless of her state, hastened to let some two hundred courtiers into the room from the antechamber, and met the nurse's rebuke by saying proudly, "This child belongs to every one and every one must rejoice over it." Sully was ordered "to fire the cannon of the arsenal, which was performed in such a manner that the report was heard even at Fontainebleau."

Round the heads of the two innocent children, legitimate and illegitimate, the plots thickened. Biron, the dashing soldier, trusted but treacherous, hot tempered and unreliable, sided with Henriette, and together they conspired with Spain. Even during the war with the Duc de Savoie Biron had been in communication with the enemy. Now he drew all who were discontented, such as the Comte d'Auvergne, the Duc de Bouillon, La Tremouille, the Comte de Soissons and others into a rising against Henri, their plans being to betray France to Spain, to assassinate the king, and to

substitute the son of the Marquise de Verneuil for the rightful dauphin. Henri, hearing that Biron, who had been his favourite, had turned traitor, did all he could to win back his fidelity. In 1601 he sent him to England on a mission to Queen Elizabeth, but all in vain, the following year the plotter returned to his plots. A former accomplice named La Fin revealed the truth to the king at Fontainebleau, a fact which gave rise to a *bon mot*: "Take care," the king had once remarked as a warning to Biron, "La Fin t'affinera." Biron was commanded to appear before Henri at Fontainebleau on June 12, 1602. Sully was also summoned to the palace. On the arrival of the latter he found the king in the avenue, dressed for the chase. "All is discovered," remarked Henri; "full confession has been made to me. In the accusation the names of a number of persons of high rank occur, amongst them one you would never think of. Guess whom." Sully told him this was quite impossible. "You know him well," persisted the king, and, since the minister was still at a loss, added, "It is you." "If the others are no more guilty than I," said Sully, smiling, "your Majesty need not trouble yourself about them." Sully was dispatched to meet La Fin in the forest on the road to Moret, and the result of his examination of the informer's papers was that he advised the king to arrest Biron and let the others go. D'Épernon, who was implicated, protested his

fidelity at Fontainebleau, and Sully believed in his innocence.

Biron arrived at Court on June 13. The king had uttered the words, "Nay, he will not come," when he was seen approaching. He bowed three times and Henri embraced him, saying, "If you had not come I should have sent in search of you." He had Sully informed immediately of Biron's arrival. Sully hastened back to Fontainebleau, and found the king in great agitation, pacing up and down before his minister's apartments. He had tried to make Biron confess in order that he might forgive him, but all in vain.

After dinner the king interviewed Biron in the Salle de la Belle Cheminée, so called because of the fine mantelpiece, in the centre of which was a marble relievo carved by Jacquet, which represented Henri on horseback, fully armed.¹ Standing before the figure of himself, the king addressed the marshal with, "Well, cousin, if the King of Spain saw me like this what would he say?" "He would scarcely feel fear of you," replied the marshal abruptly. The king's angry glance caused him to amend his ill-considered words. "Of course, sire, I mean if he saw your statue, not your person." The king withdrew and consulted with Sully, who decided to interview Biron himself, and advised him strongly to confide in the king in the

¹ This statue was removed to its present position in the Salle de Saint-Louis by Louis-Philippe in 1835.

hopes of coming to an amicable understanding. Biron repeated that he had nothing to confess. Then Henri made one more appeal, but the marshal, misled by the assurance of La Fin that nothing had been revealed, continued in his policy of holding his tongue.

For a time the king desisted in his attempts to get at the truth from Biron's lips, and arranged a set of tennis in which the marshal and the Duc d'Épernon played against himself and the Comte de Soissons. D'Épernon delicately alluded to his partner's awkward position: "You have a fine stroke, Marshal," he said, "but you play a losing game."

The next morning the king rose betimes and walked in the Jardin de Diane. He sent for Biron and had a long talk with him. Every one watched the pair in the hope of understanding some gesture which might throw a light on the traitor's attitude. He was bareheaded, and he was seen to strike his chest forcibly as though protesting his innocence and casting blame on those who dared to accuse him. He had thrown away his last chance. Henri ordered his immediate arrest. His sister endeavoured to warn him of his danger, but he refused to avail himself of the opportunity of escape. Instead he sat down to play at prime with Marie de Médicis. Henri, in anticipation of the arrest, dismissed every one from the room and took his farewell. "Adieu, Baron de Biron,"

he said. "You will remember what I told you."

On his way from the gallery the marshal was commanded to give up his sword. He cried out, "My sword! my sword which has done such good service!" and when forced to surrender it declared, "See how good Catholics are treated!" He was imprisoned in the Pavillon des Armes overlooking the Cour du Cheval Blanc. The Comte d'Auvergne was also placed under arrest, and both were sent to the Bastille. D'Auvergne was saved by the intervention of his half-sister, Henriette, but Biron was beheaded on July 21, 1602.

If Henri imagined that the marshal's death would keep his mistress and her friends from conspiring against him he was grievously mistaken. When he reproached her for being in league with such malcontents—an imputation she did not even attempt to deny—she informed him that she was tired of being his mistress, and "carried her insolence so far as to speak of the queen in terms so contemptuous that, if we may believe Henri, he was on the point of striking her."¹ He left her abruptly in order to avoid committing this outrage upon decency.

Henri's passion for this woman preyed "like a slow poison upon the principles of life." He suffered constantly from her insolence, her caprices,

¹ Sully, *Mémoires*.

her bad temper. The hatred entertained for her by the queen had passed all bounds, and the latter could not bring herself to pronounce her name. The feeling was of course mutual, and Henri was exposed "to the fury of two women who agreed in nothing but in separately conspiring to destroy his peace of mind." Marie continued to torment the king until he agreed to obtain possession of the promise of marriage he had given his mistress. Henriette, when asked for the hundredth time to resign the document, threw herself into an ungovernable rage. Sully was the king's only confidant in these matters. Henri told him of the good qualities his mistress possessed when she cared to restrain her capricious humours, and between gusts of unreasonable passion. "He praised, with a transport of delight," wrote Sully, "the charms of her conversation, her sprightly wit, her repartees so poignant, yet so full of delicacy and spirit, and here indeed he had some foundation for his praises. The queen's temper and manners were so different that the contrast made him still more sensible of those charms in his mistress. 'I find nothing of all this at home,' said he to me; 'I receive neither society, amusement, nor content from my wife. Her conversation is displeasing, her temper harsh; she never accommodates herself to my humour, nor shares in any of my cares.'"

Sully endeavoured to act as peacemaker between

the king and queen. He went to Fontainebleau to interview Marie during Henri's absence, and induced her to write a conciliatory letter to her husband, who replied in affectionate terms. In the meantime, however, she heard the king was with the Marquise de Verneuil, and her friendly feeling ended in smoke ; the quarrels were renewed with even greater bitterness than before. Sully told Richelieu that he never saw them pass a whole week without a quarrel, and that "on one occasion the queen's anger carried her away to such a point that she rushed at the king as though to strike him. He had such fear that she would forget herself that he intervened, pushing her aside with less respect than he intended, and so roughly that afterwards she complained he had hit her."¹ "I also heard from the Comte de Grammont," continued Richelieu, "that once the king, feeling outraged by the bad temper she exhibited, was constrained to leave her at Paris and go to Fontainebleau ; he sent to her to say that if she would not live more amicably with him, and alter her behaviour, he would feel obliged to send her back to Florence with all that she had brought with her from that country, meaning thereby the Maréchale d'Ancre and her husband."

Sully considered that the inharmonious relations between the royal couple were due to the king's unaccountable weaknesses and the queen's inexcus-

¹ Richelieu, *Mémoires*.

able irregularities. Finding it impossible to bring about a better state of things between them, he "slipped his neck out of the collar," and offered Sillery, the Secretary of State, the opportunity of managing the two ladies better than he had done. Sillery, it is true, did not rouse their anger quite so much, remaining on good terms with both, whilst Sully was the object of their hearty dislike. Henriette openly expressed her hatred of the Comptroller of Finances; Marie, whose mind worked more slowly, kept her indifference from becoming active until some years later.

When Henri was seriously ill at Fontainebleau in 1603 Sully was hastily summoned to his bedside, where he found the queen seated beside him and holding his hand. The king was then out of danger, and husband and wife were for the time being the best of friends. "Here," said Henri, turning to the queen, "is one of my servants who has shown sincere interest and great intelligence in the affairs of my kingdom. He would have served you faithfully, and my children too, if I had not been spared to you." Sully, however, retired soon after the king's death. There was no place for him under the regency of Marie de Médicis.

Affairs grew to such a pass that Henriette threatened to retreat to a convent, and for a time the king and queen were reconciled. It was hardly likely, however, that a woman of Henriette's tempestuous nature would carry out any plan which

involved self-effacement. She found it far more to her liking to busy herself with fresh intrigue and entangle her lover anew, even to the extent of endangering his personal safety. She had always found the rôle of intractability a paying one to assume, and she played it now. Wishing more than ever to see her, Henri went to Verneuil from Fontainebleau on several occasions, but he found it impossible to overcome her obstinacy, and never stayed for long. Meanwhile her father, accompanied by fourteen or fifteen members of the family, watched for him, intending to kill him *en route*. "Henri's good fortune saved him, every time,"¹ wrote Vittorio Siri, on whose authority these attempts at assassination rest. Henri grew very suspicious ; he sent for the Comte d'Auvergne and condemned him to death. The Comte d'Entragues received a similar sentence. Henriette was confined in the Abbaye de Beaumont near Tours. These punishments, however, were commuted to something much less severe. D'Auvergne was imprisoned in the Bastille, d'Entragues banished to his own estate, and the fair marquise received pardon, and dictated the conditions of it herself. Sully, who was sent to treat with her, "found a woman whom disgrace could not humble, whose insolence detection could not abate, and who, instead of endeavouring to excuse herself, or to implore a pardon, talked in the style of one who

¹ Siri, *Mémoires Secrets*.

had suffered wrongs, not committed them, and pretended to demand conditions for herself; she complained; she raved against the king; made new demands; wrapped herself up in reserve and affected the devotee."

Although it seems impossible to believe that Henri was not thoroughly awake by this time to the grasping and treacherous character of his mistress, he was nevertheless still unable to resist her demands. His concessions came to the ears of Marie de Médicis and caused fresh misery. At the close of 1605 Sully found "more unhappiness at Fontainebleau than there had ever been before."

No sooner was Henriette free than her hatred of Sully blazed up, and since she could no longer plot successfully against the king she did all she could to ruin his minister. She actually succeeded in shaking Henri's faith in him, and the king, who was never happy until he had heard of a man's innocence from his own lips, taxed him with the accusations that had been made against him.

Sully had journeyed to Fontainebleau to see the king on affairs of State, and was awaiting orders before returning to Paris. The king was in his apartments, surrounded by courtiers and dressing for the chase. He greeted Sully stiffly, changed his mind about hunting, and betook himself to the gardens, whither Sully followed him. On learning that Sully was setting off for Paris immediately, he permitted him to depart, saying, "I still recom-

mend to you the care of my affairs, and wish that you may continue to love me." But no sooner had Sully left him than a messenger was dispatched post-haste, commanding him to return. In the grove of white mulberry trees Henri revealed all that he had been told against him. The discourse between them lasted for four hours, and then he led Sully forth among his courtiers, and remarked loudly enough for all to hear, "I inform you that Rosny is dearer to me than ever, and that our friendship will continue until death." In spite of this assertion the king's suspicions were once again aroused by Sully's enemies, and a second and final reconciliation occurred at Fontainebleau. He took the minister by the hand and led him towards a cross-barred window which looked over the queen's garden. In the presence of the whole Court he said aloud, "You cannot conceive, my friend, how easily and happily I slept last night after having opened my heart to you and had all my doubts cleared up."

On September 14, 1606, the three children of France, the dauphin, Princess Elisabeth and Princess Christine were baptized at Fontainebleau. The ceremony was performed publicly in the dome above the Porte Dauphine, which led from the Cour Ovale to the Cour de Henri IV. For this occasion a huge painted awning was erected, on which was represented the figure of a dolphin, the king's and queen's monograms, and golden *fleur-*

de-lis. The special altar was covered with fine embroidery and precious stones. A wooden bridge hung with tapestries joined the windows of the Pavillon de Saint-Louis with the Porte Dauphine.

The usual procession was formed to convey the infants to the font, and the king and queen regarded the imposing spectacle from a window which looked on to the court.

A feast was served in the Salle de Bal after the ceremony. On the king's right sat the Cardinal du Joyeuse, the papal legate, one of the dauphin's godfathers and Eléonore de Médicis, sister to the queen, his godmother; whilst on the left were the queen and the Princesse de Condé. L'Estoile describes the splendour and richness of this scene, and makes a special point of the fact that the Duc d'Épernon wore a sword studded with eighteen hundred diamonds, and that the Maréchal de Bassompierre wore a coat of violet cloth of gold which had cost six hundred crowns to make, and had fifty pounds' weight of seed-pearls sewn upon it. The story of how he became possessed of this wonderful garment is told by Bassompierre in his Memoirs, and incidentally throws a sidelight on the gambling proclivities of the day. The tailor came to inform him that he could design a coat for him which would be finer than all the others at the baptism, and some ladies who were present at the interview agreed with Bassompierre about the style. The

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MARIE DE MANCINI.

From a painting by Mignard, National Gallery, Berlin.

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tailor's charge alone was to be six hundred crowns, and beyond that was the price of the pearls and the embroidery. "At length, before we left the house," wrote the dandy, "I, who had only seven hundred crowns in my purse, decided to take a coat which would cost me fourteen thousand crowns, and ordered the merchant to come with whom I bargained for the price of the pearls which he brought. He asked four thousand crowns, and I promised to give them him the next day." That very afternoon the Duc d'Épernon called and invited Bassompierre to go to his house for supper and cards. The gambling was fast and furious, and the young exquisite rose from the table the winner of a small fortune. "The next day the merchant came," continued Bassompierre, "I gave him his four thousand crowns, and I also paid the embroiderer, and thus had enough out of what I had gained at play to buy the coat and a sword studded with diamonds worth five thousand two hundred crowns, as well as retaining five or six thousand crowns myself."

Bassompierre was the typical fine gentleman of the period, and he throws many a sidelight on life at Court. He was a gambler, a duellist and a lady-killer, and was always welcomed in society on account of his varied accomplishments. He was often with the king at Fontainebleau. In August 1604 he describes his reception at the palace after a journey he had made to Austria. "The king was on the terrace by the Cour du Cheval Blanc

when we arrived," he wrote, "and was expecting us, receiving me with a thousand embraces. Then he took me into the queen's apartments, which looked out upon the lake, and I was well received by the ladies, who did not think the worse of me for being an inveterate German after a year's visit to the country. The next day was Saint-Bartholomew's day, August 24, and the king lent me horses to hunt the stag. He did not care to hunt himself on a day on which he had once risked so much. After the chase I found him in the Pavillon des Poêles, where we played at lansquenet with him and the queen."

Marie de Médicis' favourite game was prime, which she played with a special pack of cards, painted to represent animals. She frequently played cards with Bassompierre, who had formerly amused Gabrielle d'Estrées in much the same manner. In August 1608 he spent some days at Fontainebleau playing "the most furious game" of which he had ever heard. "Not a day passed but twenty thousand pistoles at least were lost or won. The lowest points were fifty pistoles . . . and the highest five hundred, so that in one hand fifty thousand pistoles or more might be at stake. During the year," he continued, "I won more than five hundred thousand francs at play, in spite of being distracted by a thousand follies both of youth and of love." In this latter statement Bassompierre was not overstating facts. If in-

trigue was afoot he was sure to be in it. He was an aspirant to the hand of the charming Mlle. de Montmorency, with whom the king fell passionately in love whilst she was still a mere child. Bassompierre had taken Mlle. de Montmorency to the ball which was held the evening of the baptism, and the king singled out the couple and showed them special marks of favour. It was a very magnificent ball indeed, and a grand display of fireworks took place near the Porte de la Chaussée, the soldiers being commanded not to spare their gunpowder. During the night wondrous portents were seen in the sky, strange lights and chariots of fire and luminous warriors battling in mid air, all of which phenomena were interpreted to mean a great future for the Dauphin of France. They certainly did not augur success to the king in his new and what proved to be also his final serious love affair. Charlotte de Montmorency, who when dressed as a nymph took part in a ballet and levelled a dart at the king with such grace that his heart was incurably pierced, presently married the Prince de Condé, and was so closely guarded by her husband that the king was baulked of the opportunity to express his feelings for the little princess. To achieve this result Condé had to flee from France without obtaining the king's permission to leave the country, although he had demanded an interview at Fontainebleau for this very purpose. The king communicated the result

of the meeting in a letter to Sully dated June 12, 1609, in which he wrote of Condé, "he acts like a man possessed ; you will be angry and ashamed at the things he says of me." Henri's passion for the Marquise de Verneuil was entirely wiped out by his new love for Mlle. de Montmorency. He now referred to his former mistress, to whom he had written in November 1606, "I love you more than I have ever done," as "that thin and yellow lady." As a matter of fact Henriette's day was over, her wild schemes for capturing a husband had come to nought—the Prince de Joinville and the Duc de Guise had both declined the honour of marriage with her—and she lived on in comparative solitude until 1633, becoming so fat, wrote Tallemant des Réaux, that she was monstrous ; she thought of nothing but her meals. But she retained her wit to the last.

Fontainebleau was not without illustrious visitors during the reign of Henri IV. The Venetian Ambassadors were received there in 1601, the sultan's envoy was there in 1607 and kneeling on one knee kissed the hem of the king's cloak and handed him a letter from his imperial master. Marie de Médicis, who had been anxious to witness the ceremony without being seen herself, was concealed in the room, but a mistimed burst of laughter revealed her presence. In the following year the Spanish Ambassador, Don Pedro, visited the palace. The king conducted him

round the various buildings and asked his opinion of them. At that time there were but two small chapels belonging to the palace. Don Pedro remarked that it seemed as though God were but poorly lodged at Fontainebleau. The king did not like this reflection on his piety, and retorted quickly, "You Spaniards know not how to give God other than material temples ; we Frenchmen lodge God not only in stones, we lodge Him in our hearts." Nevertheless the rebuke conveyed by the Spanish Ambassador was not lost, for the king hastened on the restoration of the Chapelle de la Sainte-Trinité.

The last official ceremony which took place at Fontainebleau in the reign of Henri IV was the marriage of the Duc de Vendôme, Gabrielle's son, to François de Lorraine in July 1609. It was a very brilliant affair and the king had so many jewels on the ribbon of his hat and on his *cordon bleu* that they were estimated to be worth more than six hundred thousand crowns. The festivities included tilting at the ring, a great feast, a concert, a dance, which the king opened with the bride, and a ballet in the Salle de la Belle Cheminée. The previous May great improvements had been made to the artificial waters of the palace. The king bet Bassompierre a thousand crowns that it would only take two days to fill the grand canal with water, whereas the operation was not finished in a week. *Fêtes* were held to commemorate the

event. Richly ornamented gondolas plied on the canal carrying musicians who discoursed sweet music, while a procession of carriages proceeded along the broad alleys on both sides of the water.

Henri's last visit to the pleasure palace took place at the beginning of 1610. On May 14 of that year he was assassinated in Paris by Ravallac. Louis XIII was then a child of ten and Marie de Médicis was appointed to the regency. Her power lasted for seven years. She liked Fontainebleau, and the Court was there nearly every year, both spring and autumn. Her favourite apartments overlooked the queen's garden. She spent her days in hunting, playing cards, receiving visitors and in stitching and embroidery of which she was very fond. Bassompierre mentions her presence at a hunt in 1611, when she was accompanied by a large following of ladies and four or five hundred gentlemen. The Court was at the palace from September to November. On one occasion whilst hunting the Princesse de Conti had a bad fall from her horse. The visitors who came to the palace were supposed to bring their own furniture and were lucky if they did not have to send some one to arrange it as well. The queen used to invite her personal friends one or two at a time. Considering the great extent of the buildings they were very sparsely appointed, and although Marie de Médicis loved beautiful things and surrounded herself with them whenever possible

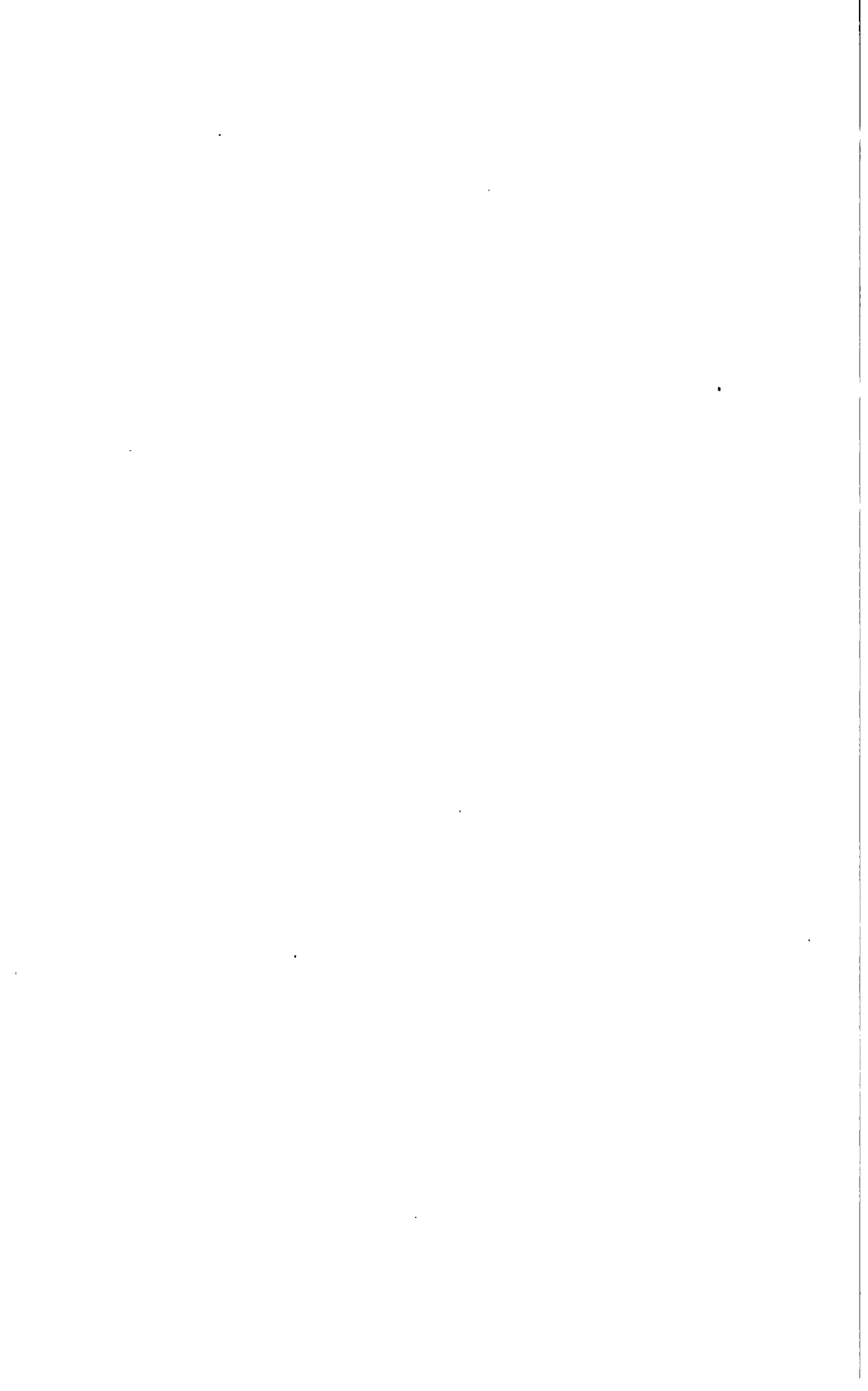
—she was so extravagant that at one time she pawned some of the Crown jewels—she could not supply the ordinary necessities of everyday life such as table utensils and napery, bed hangings and so forth, which strangers had to bring for themselves.

On the whole Marie de Médicis lived a lazy, ease-loving existence and interested herself but little in the upbringing of her children. She commanded them to be whipped frequently and there her solicitation for their welfare practically ended. Of the dauphin's infancy and childhood a detailed and interesting account is supplied in the form of a journal kept by his medical attendant, Jean de Héroard. Louis XIII was born at Fontainebleau, baptized there and began his education there in 1604 when he was only three years old. Two years later he was able to recite the quatrains of Pibrac, and in February 1607 had his first lesson in Latin. The record of his childhood is bright and picturesque, and it is difficult to realize that he grew up to be a dull and uninteresting king.

He was taken on a visit to Fontainebleau whilst a mere baby, and when the palace came in sight one of the queen's footmen who was walking beside his litter pointed to the building, saying, "Monseigneur, there is Fontainebleau." "Where?" said the little dauphin. "There." "Is it mine?" "Yes, Monseigneur. And that red thing too," he added, pointing to the brick-

work. Then the king met him and showed him the gardens and the canals, the swans, the pheasants and the gazelles, and he was taught to feed the carps with crumbs of bread. If he was asked whether he liked Saint-Germain or Fontainebleau best, he always answered Fontainebleau. Indeed, he spent many happy days there, planting cabbages in the garden, sowing peas and digging, playing tennis with his father, and gleefully kissing the balls before he served them. He was allowed to ride with the king to the hunt and to join him at table, where he begged for wine without water, "*bien rouge, bien rouge,*" as he called it. The stately palace resounded with his childish voice; he was imperious, and beat and kicked his page Bompar at times, and even threatened the sedate M. Héroard with a knife, calling him "*un homme de neige,*" or refused to do the bidding of his faithful governess Mme. de Montglas, who was dubbed Mamanga from the beginning. His little figure dressed in a violet velvet suit or scarlet satin richly trimmed with silver or gold lace was a familiar spot of colour in the grand alleys, at the kennels, or near the fishponds. He made his first official appearance at the palace in 1607, when he was ordered by the king to wash the feet of the poor, a task undertaken regularly by the monarch, and only in this instance relegated to any child of France. The day before the ceremony he was asked whether he would do the washing well, and

declared loudly that he did not want to do it at all, but finally conceded that he would wash the feet of the girls well but not of the boys. When the actual ceremony took place he hung back shyly at first, but seeing the Comte de Soissons and the king's stewards serving the poor he began to smile, and hastened to perform the pious action. When it came to giving the poor food and money, however, he took great delight in the proceeding, and distributed the alms with a really royal air. Many lessons in kingship were given to him at Fontainebleau. A year after the foot-washing, a dog jumping suddenly upon him, frightened him and he burst into tears, which brought upon him the king's stern rebuke, and he was forbidden to show fear under any circumstances. A year later again, in April 1609, he disobeyed this command, refusing to jump a little runlet of water a foot and a half wide. Henri ordered him to take a running leap, but the child was afraid of falling into the water and making those present laugh. The king jumped the streamlet himself and others followed suit to show him how to do it. M. de Souvré, his tutor, threatened him with a whip, but Louis, now thoroughly obstinate, replied he would rather be whipped than jump. The king ordered him to be taken to his room and punished, and for the first time he received three strokes from a switch, which he bore bravely, saying he was not hurt.



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Anne of Austria.
from a painting by Rubens.
Van der Sloep Collection, Amsterdam.
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CHAPTER VII

ANNE OF AUSTRIA

(A QUEEN-MOTHER)

THE charm of Louis's childhood was over. He was beginning to show himself in his true character, morose, jealous, obstinate, of feeble and melancholic temperament, when, at the age of fifteen, he was married to his child-bride, Anne of Austria, Infanta of Spain and daughter of Philip III. The wedding celebrations took place at Bordeaux, with show and pomp but without mutual affection. The king's heart remained untouched, he neglected his wife from the very first, and she grew up ignored by her husband, treated contemptuously by the queen-mother, and without a shadow of influence in affairs of State. This newly married couple had little in common. Anne, it is true, was beautiful, her figure tall and well made, her face pleasant, with rather marked features, and large eyes which looked out gravely upon the uncongenial surroundings of the French Court. She loved Spain and all that was Spanish, which was a crime in the king's sight. She loved gaiety and colour, pictures and flowers, luxury and fine linen. Mazarin said of her that

“the only punishment it would be necessary to devise for her in hell would be to compel her to sleep in Holland sheets.” This unfortunate young woman was married to a man whose sole claim to culture was a love of music, whose chief recreations were fishing, gardening, setting snares or making arquebuses, pottering with cookery or gloomily turning the pages of books he had not the heart to study. He stammered and was physically weak. He was envious of other people’s appearance, or their health, or their good temper and cheerfulness, but he was invariably ready to exact his due, and to be recognized as the ruler of a kingdom, the honour of which was dearer to him than life itself.

When Anne of Austria first received Louis XIII “she was seated on cushions, according to the Spanish custom, among her ladies, of whom she had a great number, dressed in a Spanish fashion, in a gown of green satin, embroidered in silver and gold, with large hanging sleeves, fastened with great diamonds, serving as buttons, on the arms; she wore also a closed ruff and a little cap upon her head of the same colour as her dress, in which was a heron’s feather, which enhanced by its blackness the beauty of her hair, which at that time was very handsome and worn in large curls.”¹

Had she been allowed to keep her little Court around her thus she might still have found some happiness, but her Spanish women were taken from

¹ Mme. de Motteville, *Mémoires*.

her, except for a single companion, and it seemed as though it was her fate to be deprived of the only things she really cared for. Above all she desired to be happy, but this was denied her as it was denied to many Queens of France. When she looked out for the wherewithal to accomplish her wish she was met by the questioning gaze of Richelieu, by the jealous humour of the queen-mother, or by the frigid politeness, more chilling than either, of the king himself. It is not surprising that she turned to other sources for sympathy, that she was led into light-minded coquetry, bordering on intrigue, by her sympathetic friend, the Duchesse de Chevreuse, and was dazzled for a time by the adoration of such a devoted cavalier as the Duke of Buckingham.

The events of Louis XIII's reign following upon his marriage took place at the Louvre, at Blois, anywhere rather than at Fontainebleau, where he had only paid one short visit with Anne of Austria, almost immediately after their wedding. But in 1621 Louis assembled a Council there to deal with the religious affairs of the country. After the death of Henri IV the Protestants clamoured for more privileges, and declared that the Edict of Nantes had not been faithfully observed. In 1620 they called an Assembly at La Rochelle to further the interests of the reformed religion. They had thrown down a challenge which threatened the country's peace. The king

considered it was time to move in the matter. Those who took part in the gathering at Fontainebleau were the Prince de Condé, the Ducs de Guise and Chevreuse, the king's favourite, De Luynes, who became Connétable, Cardinal de Guise, the Ducs de Mayenne, d'Elbeuf, de Brissac, several Marshals of France and Councillors of State. After a long and profound discussion it was resolved to make war upon the Reformers. The struggle culminated in the unfortunate siege of Montauban, at which De Luynes lost his power, and very soon afterwards died of fever, making way for Richelieu, who brought the war to a successful conclusion some years later under the walls of La Rochelle.

Before many more years had passed Anne of Austria was to play a part in the affairs of the pleasure palace, a spot she sincerely loved and frequently visited in the years of her regency, naming it her "charming and delicious residence." In 1625 she gave a supper in the Galerie de Diane to Cardinal Barberini, the papal legate who had come to France to settle the affairs of the Valteline. The visitor stayed at the palace three months, and was entertained with every kind of festivity. He was royally lodged in apartments near to the king, who gave a dinner in the Salle de Bal, at which Barberini was seated near him, and served with exactly the same dishes. "In the middle of the dinner," wrote Dan, "the king, his face all beaming with smiles and gaiety, turned towards the

Legate and drank to the health of the Pope, and shortly afterwards the Legate drank the health of the king." Then it was the turn of Marie de Médicis to entertain the Cardinal, which she did at a collation in the Galerie d'Ulysse ; in short, the visitor, from whom the king, queens and other royalties received communion in the Chapelle de la Saint-Trinité, was loaded with every favour and honour except the one he really wanted, namely, a concession on behalf of the people of the Valtelline, who had revolted against their rulers, the Grisons. The Pope desired the independence of the former, but Richelieu supported the latter.

Meanwhile the young queen's indiscretions were leading her into a difficult position which might very easily have had serious results upon her future. The state of the kingdom was very unsettled. The king had been married for more than ten years and no children had blessed the union. His brother Gaston, the feeble, irresolute and mischief-making Monsieur, was heir to the throne and would gladly have sat upon it. Louis was under the thumb of Richelieu and the queen-mother ; Gaston headed an opposition party, forming a plot to dethrone the king and assassinate the Cardinal. Perhaps he also contemplated marrying his brother's widow. Mixed up in this plot was Mme. de Chevreuse, the Marquis de Chalais, her lover, Maréchal d'Ornano, the Vendômes, and, it was said, the young queen herself. However much Anne

may have wished to rid the Court of Richelieu and Marie de Médicis, when accused of the intention of marrying her brother-in-law after the king's death, she replied contemptuously, "I should gain little enough by the exchange." While there seemed to Monsieur the slightest possibility of speedily succeeding his brother, he refused to take any definite steps in the marriage arranged for him by Marie de Médicis and Richelieu with the proud heiress, Mlle. de Montpensier, and thus he incurred the all-powerful Cardinal's further resentment.

Here was explosive material, and a ready instrument in causing it to ignite was the ardent but exceedingly indiscreet Henri de Talleyrand, Marquis de Chalais. In spite of the fact that he was keeper of the wardrobe to the king, he offered his services to Gaston, whom he flattered and cajoled, until Monsieur entrusted him with a share of his schemes and treated him as a favourite. A secret council was held at Fontainebleau, in which it was arranged that Chalais should assassinate Richelieu, who was then staying at Fleury, two leagues from the palace. Chalais was the worst possible sort of plotter. He was quite unable to hold his tongue and he was influenced by the last speaker on either side. In this instance he divulged the plot to De Valençay, the governor, who rebuked him very sternly for the part he was playing, and put it plainly to the would-be assassin

that slaying his minister was treason to the king. Chalais, overcome by the enormity of the crime he had contemplated, thereupon left Fontainebleau and hastened to Fleury to disclose the whole affair to the Cardinal. Moreover, he spoke of his part in the affair to Anne of Austria and the Duchesse de Chevreuse, who were surprised rather than pleased to discover that their arch-enemy was acquainted with the plot against him.

Although Chalais was let off with a severe caution and temporary pardon, Richelieu never forgave an offender, and he naturally retained a feeling of enmity against all those who were connected with the matter, including the young queen and her fair friend.

But the warning was unheeded by Chalais, who continued conspiring, until he not only suffered the death penalty himself, but implicated a number of others also. He veered between his allegiance to Richelieu, who was capable of shedding blood without pity if it seemed to his interest to do so, and Gaston, the amiable prince who was always ready to sacrifice any one to his own safety, whatever services they might previously have rendered him. First Chalais advised Monsieur to marry Mlle. de Montpensier because Richelieu wished it. Then he sided with the Maréchal d'Ornano, who was more in favour of a marriage with some foreign princess. Owing to Chalais's intervention Ornano was accused of employing his influence to prevent Gaston from

following Richelieu's wishes. That was enough for the Cardinal. It was necessary to make an example of some one, and Ornano was suitable for the purpose.

Gaston was giving a pleasure-party at Fontainebleau in celebration of his birthday. The king was for once in excellent spirits. His brother had complained of being refused any part in the affairs of State, and he had promised to allow him to be present at the Council. Louis had also shown especial favour to the marshal, had asked him to join him at tilting in the ring, and when the Council meeting was over he had gone out on to the terrace overlooking the court where the games were held, and had accepted the marshal's offer of his horse. At that hour, however, rain began to fall, and the game was abandoned. Louis remained in the company of the marshal, apparently in the friendliest of moods, when presently he pointed up at a barred window in the Pavillon des Armes and said, smiling, "That is where Maréchal de Biron was confined." Even then Ornano's suspicions were in no way aroused, nor did he think that anything unusual was taking place when he observed that the king's guards were exercising in the Cour du Cheval Blanc, and that a number of light horsemen were stationed in the avenues leading to the palace. There was an unusual stir in the king's apartments, although it was very late. Ornano had supped quietly in his own rooms with the Cardinal de

Lavalette, Chaudebonne and the Comte de Brion, when quite unexpectedly the king's *valet-de-chambre* entered the apartment and informed the marshal that his Majesty desired his presence. As he went out into the passage he was arrested by a captain of the guard, Du Hallier, who demanded his sword and imprisoned him in one of the lower galleries. The story of this arrest is given very fully in "*Mémoires d'un Favori du Duc d'Orléans.*"¹

Being informed of what had taken place, Gaston hastened into the presence of the king and expended vain tears, prayers and threats in endeavouring to obtain the marshal's release. Louis remained obdurate. The prisoner was conducted to Melun, escorted by a body of light horse, and thence to the castle of Vincennes.

Chalais was likewise responsible for compromising César, Duc de Vendôme, Governor of Brittany, and his brother, sons of Gabrielle d'Estrées, who, having joined in a conspiracy to place Gaston on the throne, were arrested at Blois. As was only to be expected, Chalais overdid the *rôle* of go-between which he loved to play, and Richelieu, finding himself deceived, and not for the first time either, threw the offender into prison at Nantes. Again Gaston appealed, wept and threatened alternately, but all to no avail. Thoroughly humiliated he declared his intention of quitting the Court, and he

¹ *Archives Curieuses*, 2nd Series, Tom. III.

journeyed to Nantes, where he married Mlle. de Montpensier on August 6, 1626.

In the meantime Chalais did all he could to save his own head by implicating every one else who had had anything to do with his plots, and in betraying all the confidences entrusted to him, but he failed in gaining a pardon and was beheaded at Nantes after a trial lasting two months.

The Court visited Fontainebleau every year, but few events of importance occurred during the life of Louis XIII. He did not care for much entertaining, preferring to spend the season quietly in country pursuits. When he was well he usually went hunting, and a story is told of his dislike to roan horses. One of his equerries possessed a very valuable and swift mount of this colour, but aware of the king's prejudice he dared not ride the animal in his company. Annoyed by the necessity of sacrificing a good steed to the king's whim, he bethought him of staining its skin black, and everybody was astonished at the beauty and agility of his new horse. Alas for his ruse, however! A heavy rainstorm came on and drenched the huntsmen, destroying the equerry's handiwork. His last state was worse than his first. The king, seeing the horse restored to its natural colour, suffered a severe shock, and greatly angered by the deception practised upon him, fell into a violent passion. "Bon Dieu! What do I see?" he cried, and then sternly ordered his equerry to withdraw

and not to appear before him again on pain of punishment.

When Charles I of England concluded peace with France, Sir Thomas Edmondes was sent as English Ambassador to ratify the treaty. He reached Paris in June 1629, but it was September before negotiations were completed. The Court was then at Fontainebleau, where he arrived on the 15th accompanied by a suite of thirty persons. The ceremony took place the following day in the parish church, which had recently been completed, and was decorated for the occasion with tapestries. A special platform had been erected and covered with violet velvet, embroidered with golden *fleurs-de-lis*.

A magnificent dinner was served in the Salle de Bal, and the king's twenty-four violins performed what Father Dan described as "a gracious harmony" throughout the meal. At three o'clock precisely Louis XIII entered the church accompanied by Anne of Austria and Marie de Médicis, Cardinal Richelieu, the Comte du Soissons and the Duc de Longueville, Maréchal de la Force and Saint-Simon, the first equerry, as well as a number of the king's bodyguard, preceded by archers and the Swiss guard with a band of drums and fifes, whilst four mace-bearers headed the procession.

The ambassador, accompanied by the Duc d'Angoulême, mounted the platform and handed the treaty to the King of France, it being already ratified and sealed with the great seal of England.

Cardinal Richelieu, who represented the Grand Almoner on this occasion, took up a copy of the Holy Gospels, specially draped with a rich veil of gold and silver, and approaching Louis, handed him the Book to kiss, after partially removing the veil. Whilst the king stood with his hand resting on the Holy Gospels, M. Bouthillier, Secretary of State, read the oath aloud in clear, resounding tones, to which his Majesty made the customary response. Then the signing of the act was completed, and the king embraced the English Ambassador, taking his hand in witness of peace and amity. Music resounded in the church, trumpets were blown and the heralds cried, "Vive le roi!" It was all very impressive.

Another ceremony took place in May 1633, of which La Grande Mademoiselle has left a record in her Memoirs. This was the investiture of forty-nine Knights of the Order of the Holy Ghost, and the degradation of two who had incurred the displeasure of Richelieu owing to their enrolling themselves among Gaston's sympathizers. The Salle de la Belle Cheminée was decorated for the occasion with the arms and cloaks of the Order. The ceremony lasted three days, the 14th, 15th and 16th of May. On the first day Louis went to the Pavillon des Poêles, where the knights were assembled dressed in the cloaks and collars of the Order, while the novices wore white and cloth of silver with a black cap set with glittering jewels.

A procession was formed which filed into the Salle de la Belle Cheminée, where vespers were sung. Then the newly made knights were presented to the king one by one. On the 15th the ceremony was continued, the procession marching in the same order. All the knights were now wearing the full robes of the Order. After the formalities there was feasting, and the ceremony was completed the next day. Enormous crowds had gathered at Fontainebleau for the occasion.

“One thing I remember is having witnessed the ceremony of making Knights of the Order at Fontainebleau,” wrote La Grande Mademoiselle, “on which occasion the Duc d’Elbeuf and the Marquis de la Vieuville were degraded. I saw the paintings of their arms, which were in a row with the others, taken down and broken in pieces.

“I asked the reason. I was told that this disgrace was inflicted on them because they had accompanied Monsieur. I burst into tears, and felt so affected by this treatment that I insisted on retiring, saying that I could not witness this act with composure. Yet my displeasure did not give me a distaste to the Court. I was delighted when it was at Fontainebleau and their Majesties sent for me thither. I was there for three or four weeks and enjoyed myself heartily on account of the variety of the spectacles held, which greatly pleased me.”

The Court stayed at the palace in the following year and entertained the Duchesse de Lorraine, a

charming guest ; Louis XIII and Anne of Austria drove nearly a league to meet her, accompanied by the Duchesses de Rohan and de Chaulnes, by Mlle. de Rohan and a number of ladies-in-waiting. The Duchesse de Lorraine, whose christian name was Nicole, stepped out of her carriage the moment she saw her royal host and hostess approaching. They did the same ; the customary greetings took place, and then Nicole stepped into the queen's carriage and they proceeded to Fontainebleau. A crowd of the curious both on foot and driving witnessed the visitor's arrival at the palace. Nicole was taken to the queen's apartments and then to her own, which it is interesting to notice were in this instance "richly adorned with some of the king's own furniture."

Anne of Austria was now nearing the zenith of her beauty, but she was still a cipher in affairs of State. As queen she was never very interesting, as queen-regent her motherliness endowed her with charm. She was preparing for the part she was to play before many more years had passed. She had lost the frivolous tendency indulged in during her youth under the influence of the Duchesse de Chevreuse, and had grown grave and discreet both in acting and speaking. In short, she had completely settled down and was, wrote Mme. de Motteville, "the most regular person in the world in all her habits of life . . . ; her amusements were all moderate ; she loved nothing ardently."

But she still had one great desire, and that was to become a mother. In the fashion of the times, to bring about the consummation of these hopes, she had recourse to a famous fountain, often resorted to by childless women, at Féricy, two leagues from Fontainebleau. In the tiny church there masses were performed for nine days while the queen took a course of the waters. When at length her wish was fulfilled, and she had given birth to two sons, her position, although greatly improved in theory, did not change for the better in practice. The dauphin was born in 1638, when his mother had been married for twenty-three years, and was not far short of forty years of age. She was still as fresh and fair as though she had been quite a young woman. Mme. de Motteville described her personal appearance about this date.

“She wore her hair in the fashion of a round coiffure, transparently frizzed and with much powder; after that she took to curls. . . . Her features were not delicate, having even the defect of too thick a nose, and she wore, in Spanish fashion, too much rouge; but she was fair, and never was there a finer skin than hers. Her eyes were perfectly beautiful; gentleness and majesty united in them; their colour, mingled with green, made her glance the more vivid and full of all the charms that Nature gave them. Her mouth was small and rosy, the smile admirable.”

The same writer gave an account of the queen's daily life in all its unpretentious simplicity.

"Her supper finished, we ate the rest of it, without order or ceremony, using, for all convenience, her napkin and the remains of her bread ; and although this meal was ill-arranged, it was not disagreeable, through the quality of the persons present, and because of the jests and the conversation of the queen, who told us good things and laughed much because the women who served her, and who were not the most polite in the world, tried to rob us of all they could to keep it for the morrow. After this feast we followed her into her cabinet, where a gay and lively conversation continued till midnight or one o'clock ; and then, after she was undressed, and often when she was in bed and ready to go to sleep, we left her to do likewise.

"We followed this life punctually for several years, even during the little journeys to Fontainebleau and Saint-Germain."

A notable arrival at the palace towards the close of Louis XIII's reign was the great Richelieu, now so weak and ailing as to necessitate his being borne thither in the huge red litter which required four-and-twenty men to carry it, was adorned with gold and painted flowers, and was almost as commodious as a present-day *wagon-lit*. The invalid was barely able to leave this travelling-chamber,

“machine” as it was called, which had to be put through the window of his hotel.

A famous prophecy of the day ran, “Quand bonnet rouge passera par la fenêtre à quarante onces on coupera la tête et tout périra.” This was taken to be fulfilled by the execution of Cinq Mars and De Thou. “His Majesty,” wrote La Grande Mademoiselle, “waited for him [Richelieu] at Fontainebleau, where he arrived some days later. The sacrifice which was being made of the heads of MM. de Cinq Mars and De Thou did not appear sufficient for him. To satisfy him he wished that all those who had been friendly with these unfortunates, and had offended him, should feel the effects of his anger; and he wished to revive his power, which he knew people believed to be diminishing. He was unable to arrive at this desired result at Fontainebleau, however.”

Cinq Mars was introduced at Court by Richelieu himself in the hope that he might become the king's favourite. He was appointed Master of the Wardrobe, and of the Horse. He speedily showed his talents, and from being a simple courtier rose to demand a seat in the royal council. Then Richelieu stepped in and opposed his over-weening ambition. In revenge for this snub Cinq Mars conspired against him, taking the part of Gaston. Thereupon Richelieu persuaded Louis to have him arrested and executed. The

king accompanied the great man back to Paris, and within a year of the visit they both died, Richelieu on December 4, 1642, Louis on May 14, 1643.

The chief improvements made at Fontainebleau during the reign of Louis XIII were the beautiful horseshoe staircase which Guilbert called "the marvel of Europe," the completion of the Chapelle de la Sainte-Trinité begun by Henri IV, and various paintings and decorations in the king's apartments. The staircase, originally the work of Du Cerceau, was reconstructed by Lemercier in 1634 at the cost of one hundred thousand livres.

One of the features of the reign was the enormous increase in the practice of duelling, with which no legislature appeared able to cope adequately. The forest of Fontainebleau was naturally a favourite scene of these encounters. "Who fought yesterday?" or "Who is settling his affairs this morning?" was the legitimate opening to conversation. Valençay, Boutteville and Cavoie were amongst the names of notorious duellists who were known to have risked their lives in single combat within a few miles of the palace.

The death of Louis XIII took place when his son had reached the age of five. Anne of Austria was appointed regent, and Mazarin governed the country. During the unsettled years of the Fronde the stage was shifted from Fontainebleau to the

Palais Royal, where scenes of political activity were enacted. But in times of ease and recreation the pleasure palace was always in favour.

In 1644 the unhappy exiled Queen Henrietta of England made it her temporary refuge. This lady, daughter of Henri IV and wife of Charles I, was obliged to flee her country after Cromwell's first victories, and, being a daughter of France, was welcomed to the land of her birth with open arms. She remained at Bourbon for three months, taking the waters there, for she was so crippled she could hardly walk. "Her misfortunes," wrote Mme. de Motteville, "had given her such a sadness, and her mind was so filled with her sorrows, that she wept continually, which shows what the suffering of soul and body can do, for by nature this princess was gay and talked pleasantly." No trace remained at this date of her past beauty, and it was her own belief that no woman could be beautiful after twenty-two years of age. Nevertheless, according to Mme. de Motteville, "Her eyes were fine, her complexion admirable, and her nose well shaped. There was something so agreeable in her face that it made her beloved by every one, but she was thin and short ; her figure was even deformed, and her mouth, never handsome naturally, was now, from the thinness of her face, too large."

This saddened lady, who "suffered infinitely, but did not die," and who "from being the most opulent queen on earth now saw before her a life-

time of poverty and afflictions enough to horrify her," was tenderly received at Fontainebleau by Anne of Austria, who conducted her immediately to her own apartments. Marie de Gonzague was also staying at the palace, and the following year arrangements were made for the latter's marriage with the King of Poland. The Polish Ambassadors who were to negotiate matters were received in the queen's apartments. When they entered the *salon* Princesse Marie happened to be there, but she rose and withdrew to a distance in order that their conversation might not in any way be hampered by her presence. "She made use of me to screen herself from their sight," wrote Mme. de Motteville, "and by putting me before her prevented the men who were to be her subjects from perceiving her." When the formalities, "which only lasted the length of a compliment," were over the ambassadors begged that Marie might be pointed out to them. One of them bowed to her with profound courtesy, and when a further audience was held on the following day he treated her as he would have treated her had she already been queen. A few days later the marriage contract was signed in the king's study.

The autumn season of that year had been an exceedingly fine one. It was followed by a beautiful summer in 1645, and Anne of Austria, who far preferred Fontainebleau to the Louvre, arranged that the Court should remain in the

country from the beginning of July until late in the autumn. The ladies spent the long summer hours bathing and sitting in the cool shade of the forest. They dressed in long trailing gowns made of grey linen. The king, who was between eight and nine years old, bathed also with Marshal de Villeroy, his tutor. The queen interested herself in the invalids of the town and founded the Hôpital de la Charité, which contained fourteen beds, and she visited the patients now and again. In the same year many French nobles were wounded at the siege of Mardyke, the Duc d'Enghien and the Duc de Nemours amongst them. When the courier arrived with the news "all the rooms at Fontainebleau resounded with cries." Soon after the siege the Ducs de Guise, d'Elbeuf, de Candale, accompanied Monsieur, the Duc d'Orléans, to Fontainebleau, and were glad to rest after the fatigues of warfare "in the loveliest spot in the world."

In August the Prince of Wales followed his mother to France, and Queen Henrietta Maria, accompanied by her son, paid a visit to the Court. Mazarin met them at some distance from the palace. He was followed by Louis XIV and Anne of Austria, who heartily welcomed the travellers. When they alighted from the coaches the little king gave his hand to his aunt, whilst the Prince of Wales led the queen-regent to her carriage. Queen Henrietta's apartments looked out upon the

Cour de la Fontaine; her son's were above them. The visit lasted three days. Charles had been in Paris two months, and this was the occasion of his formal presentation to the queen-regent and the king. Ceremony was not waived; it had been agreed between the two queens that the young prince should have the honour of being seated in a *fauteuil*, but on all future visits he was accommodated with a *petit siège*. He was fairly good-looking, tall and dark, but unable to speak or understand a word of French. All kinds of amusements were provided for him, and every one tried to make Queen Henrietta forget her troubles. Hunting, tennis, concerts, suppers, filled the quickly passing hours. The Cardinal gave a dinner in the Galerie des Cerfs, during which music was performed by the king's violins. After the dinner the Prince of Wales received a present of two fine horses from his host. A ball was given in the king's apartments, and the prince was initiated into the mysteries of the *Française*. La Grande Mademoiselle was staying at the palace, and Charles was regarded as a possible husband for her. His fortunes, however, were so uncertain that Mademoiselle indulged but little in matrimonial projects where he was concerned, for it came upon her that she certainly ought to marry an emperor. Even though it was said that the Prince of Wales was her "despairing lover" this failed to influence her sentiments with regard to him. "I perceived," she wrote, "that the Queen

of England would have liked to persuade me that he was in love with me ; that he talked of it incessantly. . . . I should not make great account of what I was told on behalf of a man who could say nothing for himself." The prince paid a second visit to Fontainebleau a year later, and was equally well entertained. He had much improved in appearance, and his knowledge of the language had increased, but he did not appear to great advantage at the French Court.

During the prolonged stay of the Court at Fontainebleau in 1646 the first shadow of a coming tragedy was thrown upon the palace. The tragedy itself did not take place till ten years later, and there was nothing in the visit of the Comte de la Gardie, Ambassador-Extraordinary of the Queen of Sweden, to warn the king and the queen of the sinister act which his mistress was to perpetrate within its walls. La Gardie was well received, and Mme. de Motteville describes his visit in her *Memoirs*. Balls, comedies, feasts and many kinds of amusement were organized for his approval. "He adorned the drive by the canal of Fontainebleau with a coach of gold and silver embroidery, which was made expressly for his queen. It was drawn by six horses, richly harnessed, followed by a dozen pages in the Queen of Sweden's livery, which was yellow and black with silver lace. This image of another Court, uniting with the reality and beauty of ours, made the drive by the canal most

agreeable." La Gardie was one of Christina's favourites. She had many, and treated them much alike. She loaded them with honours, gave them her personal friendship, and entrusted them with her confidence. Suddenly she grew weary, and dismissed them without a word of explanation. This characteristic led to the ill-considered action which left a blood-red stain on the annals of the pleasure palace.

CHRISTINA OF SWEDEN
(THE SYBIL OF THE NORTH)

CHAPTER VIII

CHRISTINA OF SWEDEN

(THE SYBIL OF THE NORTH)

“WE can still see at Fontainebleau in the great *salon* the blood of the man she caused to be murdered there,” wrote Elisabeth-Charlotte, Princess Palatine, in 1717. Sixty years had passed since Queen Christina took the law into her own hands and punished with a traitor’s death the man to whom she had unwisely entrusted her confidence. The nature of his perfidy has never been revealed. History hesitates between assigning the cause of Christina’s act to the jealousy of an outraged woman, or to the pride of a queen betrayed by a servant. Madame concluded her bitter verdict with phrases which were unjust. “She did not wish that all that he knew about her should come to be known, and she thought certain things would surely be divulged unless she put an end to his life. He had already begun to tattle, out of jealousy for another man who had supplanted him in her good graces. She was very vindictive and given to all sorts of debauchery. If she had

not had so much intellect no one could have endured her."

The truth was that very few women understood Christina, and that she shocked them almost all. They were unable to estimate impartially the strange personality of one of their own sex who could throw aside a crown for the joys of foreign travel. They resented her independent attitude. They could not follow the workings of her masculine mind. Christina, with characteristic indifference, expressed her contempt openly for everything feminine. It was her boast that she liked men not because they were men, but because they were not women. No woman was clever enough to make the obvious retort that she disliked Christina not because she was a woman, but because she was not a man. Christina might have thought that clever, and have sworn friendship with the originator in spite of her sex. Having no one to snub her, however, she went her own way without guidance, and came to grief in trying to follow an ideal *ad absurdum*. She wanted to be regarded as a great ruler of a country rich in learning, in culture, in progressive conditions, and to have the attention of Europe centred upon her. In aiming to be a model king, she neglected to cultivate the characteristics which make a sensible woman, and so failed to become even a good queen.

A strange being was this Christina; brilliant and enigmatic, grand, and at the same time grotesque,

noble but perverse, the daughter of a fine, level-headed man, and utterly incapable woman, born of a simple and grave northern race, with all the fire and passion of a southern nationality in her blood.

Nothing was wanting to complete the happiness of Gustavus Adolphus of Sweden, and his wife Maria Eleanora, daughter of the Elector of Brandenburg, save the birth of an heir to the throne. After six years of marriage two daughters had come and died when Christina arrived bringing further disappointment with her. At first it was thought that the king's dearest hopes had been fulfilled. "I came into the world all over hair," she wrote in her Memoirs; "my voice was strong and harsh. This made all the women think I was a boy, and they gave vent to their joy in exclamations which at first deceived the king, prepared as he was to wish for an heir."¹ When he was told the truth he made the best of it, saying, "I am satisfied. I pray God to keep her safe for me." On the other hand, the queen was inconsolable. "She could not bear to see me," declared Christina, "because she said I was a girl, and ugly to boot; and she was right enough, for I was as tawny as a little Moor."

When Christina was still a tiny baby she heard guns fired for the first time. It had been suggested

¹ Vie par sa même. Arckenholtz, *Mémoires concernant Christine, Reine de Suède*, Tom. III.

that the sound might frighten her, but the king commanded the gunners to proceed, saying, "She is the daughter of a soldier; she must grow accustomed to it." To the surprise of everybody the baby showed the greatest delight, and, though unable to speak, clapped her hands, and made signs that she wished the firing to be repeated. Unfortunately this fond and proud father, who made many plans for the great future of the princess, was killed at Lutzen in 1632, when Christina was barely six years old. Maria Eleanora, who, though beautiful and gentle, was greatly wanting in common-sense, and was ordinarily much given to weeping, made the occasion of her husband's death one of continuous tears for weeks, which grew into months of mourning. She shut herself up in her own apartment, which was hung with black from ceiling to floor, the windows also being draped, and, by the dim glow of wax-lights which burned day and night, sat brooding over a golden casket in which her husband's heart was enclosed. She desired to make her little daughter take part in this orgy of sorrow, but fortunately for Christina the king had left explicit instructions regarding her upbringing and education, and she was placed under the guardianship of a regency council, her mother being excluded from having any say in the matter of her daughter's education or the government of the country. Chancellor Oxenstierna, who was the

real ruler during Christina's minority, sent the queen-mother to one of her castles, where she might nurse her grief without affecting other people, and himself superintended the classical education which had been decided upon for the princess. From the very beginning she scorned all feminine pursuits, and devoted herself entirely to the studies which would have fallen to her share had she in reality been a prince. There was no end to the intellectual accomplishments which she acquired during the years of her youth, in which she worked unremittingly week in, week out, continually surrounded by learned men from whom she drew vast stores of knowledge, and whom she even outstripped in aptitude. She knew all the languages, most of which she spoke passably. She read Petronius and Martial, and studied Tacitus, which she called "her game at chess," every day. If she was not the most dangerous of pedants she certainly did not escape the worst characteristics of the brilliant blue-stockings. She was usually ink-stained, always untidy, her toilet was performed in a quarter of an hour, and a comb combined with a knot of ribbon constituted her head-dress when she did not wear a wig. Her linen was not beyond reproach; she did not care in the least what she ate, and as long as she might eat it in private was never heard to remark upon her food. She burnt the candle at both ends, and was satisfied with three or four hours' sleep at night. An erudite

woman such as Christina, bubbling over with emancipated and extraordinary ideas, seems entirely out of place in the pleasure palace of Fontainebleau. But she rendered her stay there peculiarly and markedly conspicuous, which makes it necessary to study her personality, and endeavour to understand if possible the conditions and causes which were at the root of her behaviour. Three of her actions called most loudly for an explanation : her irrevocable determination to remain single, her conversion to Roman Catholicism, and her abdication of the throne. In reality these much-cited events were the natural outcome of inexplicable idiosyncrasies. It is exceedingly difficult to estimate correctly a character so intricate, so unbalanced as that of Christina of Sweden. With the strongest bias towards things intellectual, reasonable and cool-headed, she was liable to be carried away by her enthusiasms, to lose all sense of proportion and to judge matters from her own personal standpoint without the slightest regard to their political significance or their effect upon the people involved. She laid down certain tenets to which she rigidly adhered without considering whither their indulgence might carry her, and at the same time chose to disregard many ordinary laws of conduct which would have done much to smoothen her path in life. She prided herself upon being utterly fearless. It was her boast that she feared death no more than sleep. Yet she refused to entertain the

idea of matrimony and motherhood, saying that she was born free and intended to die free. At least she knew some of her own faults, and wrote of herself, "I was distrustful, suspicious, ambitious to excess. I was hot-tempered, proud and impatient, contemptuous and satirical. I gave no one quarter. I was, too, incredulous and little of a devotee." But she never realized that she was remarkably easily led in some directions, and fell a prey to the unscrupulous influence of quacks and *poseurs*. She collected round her a group of philosophers, *savants*, mystics, poets, intriguers of all kinds, with but little discernment as to the value of their art or science, and less calculation of what their presence was to cost her. In spite of her matter-of-fact training she dabbled in occultism, spending fortunes in her endeavours to discover the truth. On this score she was held up to ridicule, and it was said of her contemptuously that "Love was not the only amusement of this royal lady; chemistry was her more serious business, though she had lost considerable sums of money by it at Hamburg; and particularly with one Borry, a chemist of Milan, who is now condemned to perpetual imprisonment for heresy in the castle of St. Angelo, and who returned her only cinders and smoke for two or three thousand crowns." At Rome she built a great laboratory in her palace "and consumed the best part of her ready cash, not so much in coals and ingredients as

the roguery of the people she employed in this miserable trade.”¹

But in Sweden, during the early years of her reign, she made a genuine attempt to raise the standard of culture. Somaize spent a year with her ; Descartes, to please her, journeyed to Stockholm. She corresponded with Scarron, who sent her one of his comedies ; with Scudéry, who dedicated “ Alaric ” to her. Ménage wrote an eclogue in her honour, and she exchanged *bón mots* with him, and presented him with a gold chain, as well as bestowing one upon Balzac, who sent her his works to read. Mlle. de Scudéry received help from her, and Mezeray was also in receipt of her pecuniary favours. She tried to persuade Benserade to become one of her Court, and when he refused she wrote him the following characteristic letter—

“ You may bless your fortunate star which has prevented you from coming to Sweden. A mind so delicate as yours would have caught a chill here, and you would have gone home with a spiritual cold in your head. You would have been all the rage in Paris, with a square beard, the coat of a Lapp, with shoes to match, just back from the country of hoar frost.”

It may be objected that this and much that is to follow is irrelevant to the story of Fontainebleau.

¹ *The History of the Intrigues and Gallantries of Christina, Queen of Sweden, and her Court whilst she was at Rome.*

But Christina played a whole act in the drama of the palace, and is therefore entitled to an introduction which should help to elucidate how, why, and in what mood she arrived there. Indeed, all that throws a light on her early life and tastes is valuable, even necessary, as a guide to her extraordinary personality and the motives which prompted her to a deed of violence. Moreover, she is a fascinating subject, and is not easily dismissed in a few sentences.

She possessed, then, undoubted leanings towards the French. She was infected by the spirit of preciosity. Not only was she enamoured of their literature, their culture and their mode of living, but she gladly spent fortunes in gratifying her foreign tastes and producing an artificial French atmosphere in her own capital. Even her secretaries and her doctors were Frenchmen, and these alien hangers-on devoured the hard-earned wealth of the Swedish people, who were starving whilst she squandered their money in injudicious attempts to reconstitute Court life. Suddenly she showed the instability which was fundamental in her character. Up to this time she had never ceased to devote her attentions to the actual government of the country as well as to her studies and hobbies, but quite unexpectedly she yielded herself entirely to the influence of a French quack, Bourdelot—he was said to be the son of a barber—who turned her Court into an absurd caricature of the Louvre,

persuaded her to desist from study and government, and replaced these exacting occupations by dancing, masquerading, madcap pranks and childish frivolities of all kinds. The country was thrown into consternation ; every one thought the queen had lost her senses. The treasury was empty, ruin was staring the people in the face. The money that she had previously spent on collecting manuscripts, books and *objets d'art* was still wrung from the poor to be thrown away on revelry and feasting. The dissatisfaction which had been felt for some time past now came to a head, and was everywhere openly expressed. At last the queen yielded to the entreaties of her people. Bourdelot was sent about his business. Then the Court quieted down somewhat, and there seemed hope of permanent reform, when of a sudden Christina announced her desire to abdicate the throne. It was not the first time she had expressed some such intention, but she refused to listen to any further opposition on the part of her ministers. She wished to travel, her people failed to interest her, and queenship was no recompense for being thwarted of freedom or deprived of means wherewith to gratify her extravagant tastes. Seizing everything of value which was portable she started for Denmark, went from thence to Hamburg, to Brussels, where in 1654 she changed her religion, to Antwerp and to Inspruck, where in 1655 she made a public profession of Catholic faith. In short, she travelled

“like a vagabond from province to province, visiting all the Courts of Europe,”¹ arriving finally at Rome, which for the time being she called her headquarters, and where she established herself with an almost royal household, sending for her manuscripts and other collections and purchasing additions whenever possible.

At last came the opportunity she longed for, which brought her to France, and she set sail for Marseilles. The French were brimful of curiosity to see this most extraordinary personage, who had become notorious, and was known by such names as the Sybil of the North, the tenth Muse, or the strolling queen. On September 8, 1656, she entered Paris escorted by five thousand horsemen. She wore a scarlet doublet, a woman's skirt, a plumed hat, and rode astride a big white horse. Pistols were at her holster, and she carried a cane. The Court was at Compiègne, and she went thither to see the king and queen-mother. Mme. de Motteville gave an account of her arrival: “She was well received at Court. Mazarin introduced the king and Monsieur to her as two noblemen of the highest rank in France, but, having seen their portraits at the Louvre, she recognized them, and remarked wittily, she could well believe it, for they seemed to her born to wear crowns.” Anne of Austria greeted her with many compliments, expressing joy at meeting her. “I was one of

¹ Montglat, *Mémoires*.

she let men wait upon her in her most private hours ; she affected to be a man in all her actions ; she laughed immoderately when anything pleased her." She "put her legs up on seats as high as the one she was sitting on ; and showed them too freely."

La Grande Mademoiselle was equally shocked when she saw her. Learning that Queen Christina was at Fontainebleau, Mademoiselle went there on the return journey from Forges. She sent a message begging to know when she might have the honour of an interview, and desiring information regarding the manner in which she would be received. She was told to choose her own conditions, and she asked for an arm-chair so that she might sit in Christina's presence, to mark her equality of rank and birth. "The queen," she wrote describing the meeting, "was in a beautiful room à l'*Italienne*, surrounded by a large company." Having asked Mademoiselle to be seated, the latter established herself in the arm-chair, and together they witnessed a ballet which was proceeding in the next room. Mademoiselle was astonished at her appearance, which she thought resembled that of a pretty little boy. "After the ballet," continued Mademoiselle in her Memoirs, "we went to the play. Here she surprised me very much, applauding the parts which pleased her, taking God to witness, throwing herself back in her chair, crossing her legs, resting them on the arms of her

chair, and assuming other postures, such as I have never seen taken but by Trivelin and Jodelet, two famous buffoons. She repeated the verses that pleased her ; spoke on several subjects, saying everything in a very agreeable manner. Then she sank into a profound reverie, drawing very deep sighs ; and recovering herself suddenly, as a person who awakes in surprise. She was in all respects a most extraordinary creature."

One of her absurdities is described by Madame Elisabeth-Charlotte in her Correspondence. The story was told her by Louis XIV : " She never wore night-caps, but she twisted a towel round her head. Once, not being able to sleep, she had music played beside her bed. As the concert pleased her she suddenly protruded her head beyond the curtains and called out, ' Devil's death ! how well they play ! ' " The musicians were so terrified at this apparition that they could not perform another note.

Whilst at the French Court in 1656 Christina showed great want of tact, and earned the disapproval of Anne of Austria. She encouraged Louis XIV in his passion for Marie de Mancini, and indiscreetly remarked to him, " If I were in your place I would marry the woman I loved." The queen-mother was furious, and hastened Christina's departure, who was thereupon induced to set out for Italy. When she arrived in Rome it was to discover that the plague was raging

there, and she thought it well to return to France.

In October 1657 she arrived at Fontainebleau, where apartments had been assigned to her in the absence of the Court. Before a fortnight had passed Christina, who had till then been regarded as a madcap and a nuisance, more amusing than dangerous, suddenly lost what reputation she possessed, and was looked at askance as a murderess and a tyrant.

It had been said of her that instead of making men die of love for her, she made them die of shame and despair, and that one favourite superseded another without warning or explanation. Both these traits appear in her attitude towards the two chief actors in the tragedy she arranged at Fontainebleau. The Marquis Monaldeschi, her grand equerry, was the favourite of yesterday; Comte Sentinelli, Captain of the Guard, was the favourite of the day.

The best and most reliable account of the affair, and that most frequently quoted, was written by Father Lebel.¹

On November 6, at a quarter past nine in the morning, the queen being at Fontainebleau, lodging in the conciergerie of the palace, sent a groom of the chambers with a message to the Father, requesting him to attend upon her imme-

¹ Arckenholtz, *Mémoires concernant Christine, Reine de Suède*, Tom. II.

diately. He went alone and at once, fearful lest he should have kept Christina waiting. However, he was allowed to remain for some time in the anteroom. Presently he was ushered into the apartment in which the queen was sitting. She led him at once to the *Galerie des Cerfs*, and remarked that she felt certain she could speak to him in confidence, without fear of betrayal. Then she made him take an oath of secrecy. He responded that if need be he would remain both blind and dumb. She then placed in his hands a sealed packet of papers, and commanded him to return it to her when she claimed it, irrespective of whomsoever might be in her presence. She also asked him to remember the day, hour and place in which she had given the packet into his care, and then he was allowed to take his departure carrying the papers with him.

At one o'clock on Saturday, November 10, she sent for him again and, thinking she might require him to return the packet, he took it with him. He was shown into the *Galerie des Cerfs*, and the door was firmly closed behind him. The queen was in the gallery accompanied by two or three of her suite. Lebel advanced towards her. She then demanded him to give her the packet. Monaldeschi was one of those present. Lebel handed the packet to Christina, who opened it after a short pause, and drawing forth some papers from the cover requested her equerry to

glance at them and tell her if he recognized them. She spoke in angry accents. The marquis, unable to disguise his fear, replied in a trembling voice that they were copies made out in her handwriting. Then the queen produced the originals, calling him "traitor," and the armed men drew their swords. Monaldeschi, thus brought to book, confessed to the authorship of the documents, but endeavoured to excuse his actions, casting blame on others. Eventually, however, he threw himself at the queen's feet, imploring her pardon. She refused to listen. He rose from his undignified position and followed the queen from one corner of the apartment to another in his effort to justify his conduct. She listened without showing any signs of perturbation, leaning the while on an ebony stick with a round handle, and then turning to Lebel, she said, "Bear witness, Father, that I am not acting in haste, and that I am allowing this traitor as much time to justify his conduct as he could possibly expect from one whom he has injured." After further parleying the marquis gave up certain papers and some keys, which he drew out of his pocket. The conference lasted for over an hour, but Monaldeschi was not able to offer any explanation which satisfied the queen. At length she approached the priest and, speaking very solemnly, committed the condemned man into his hands, with the words, "Father, I leave this sinner to you. Prepare him for death and have

care for his soul." At this ominous sentence both Lebel and the marquis threw themselves at her feet, pleading for pardon, which she refused. She withdrew from the room, leaving her victim to the ministration of the priest and the less tender mercies of the men with drawn swords.

The marquis, in terrible fear of death, cast himself at the feet of Lebel, beseeching that he would go to the queen and intercede with her for his life. The guards pressed closer upon him with their naked swords, urging him to confess. Father Lebel implored the accused to ask pardon of God. He went himself to appeal once more to Christina, whom he found obdurate. He pointed out to her that the French king, in whose palace she was residing, would hardly approve of her taking justice into her own hands as she was preparing to do. To this she had a ready answer: "I am neither an exile nor a prisoner; I have the right to punish my servants, and am only answerable to God for my actions." She persisted in the statement that the enormity of her equerry's crime justified the course she was about to take.

Seeing that all his appeals were fruitless, Lebel returned to the Galerie des Cerfs to prepare the victim of the queen's anger for death. Monaldeschi betrayed as much cowardice as he had previously shown perfidy. His confession was interrupted by shrieks and cries for mercy. Even Sentinelli, the chosen executioner, was moved to pity, and

proceeded to the queen to intercede on behalf of her victim. All to no purpose, she refused to desist from her intention. The confession was continued in a jumble of French, Latin and Italian, interspersed with gasps and groans and intervals of silence. At length the chief guard, to cut short this horrible scene, drove the marquis against the wall at the sword's point, and thrust at him to hasten his speech. His weapon bent in his hand, having struck a coat of mail that Monaldeschi was wearing. The doomed man stammered through the remainder of his confession, and received absolution. Blows were rained upon him by the swordsmen to little purpose, owing to the protective coat of mail. After wounding him in the neck Sentinelli at length thrust his sword through his victim's throat. Lebel stood over the dying man uttering prayers for his soul. Monaldeschi breathed his last, the one word "Dieu" upon his lips. His body was at once removed, and buried in the church at Avon. Christina sent money to Father Lebel in order that masses might be said for the soul of the servant who had betrayed her.

Mme. de Motteville gave a long and by no means unbiassed account of the affair in her Memoirs. She put into the queen's mouth the words, "He must die ; and in order to make him confess himself, wound him." These sentiments are hardly in keeping with the humanity and

compassion which Christina had shown on many previous occasions. Nor was the manner in which she summed up her story quite unprejudiced.

“This barbarous princess,” she wrote, “after so cruel an action, remained in her room, laughing and talking as tranquilly as if she had done a mere commonplace thing, or a laudable one. Our queen, Christian that she was, who had had so many enemies whom she ought to have punished, but who had never received from her aught else than kindness, was scandalized. The king and Monsieur blamed this action; and the minister who was not cruel was shocked. In fact the whole Court was horrified at so ugly a vengeance, and those who had esteemed this queen were ashamed at having lauded her; though this was not without scorn of the poor dead man, who had not had courage either to escape or defend himself, and had worn against such an event so useless a precaution; for he ought at least to have had a dagger and used it valiantly.”

The general opinion with regard to Christina's action was that she did not actually overstep her powers judicially, but that she should on no account have exerted them to the uttermost at Fontainebleau, where the feelings of her royal host should at least have been consulted. The French Court did not take exception from the point of view of the legality of the execution, but socially Christina was sternly ostracized. She remained in the palace for three months longer,

having written an ill-considered letter to Mazarin in answer to his advice not to show herself in Paris. She sent a message to Cromwell, who calmly ignored her broad hint that she desired an invitation to England. After many entreaties she was allowed to return to Paris, and was present at the Carnival Ballet of 1658. She particularly wished to see the king dance. She was lodged in Mazarin's apartment at the Louvre, but was given clearly to understand that her room was preferred to her company. Every one was offended by her want of decorum. "She went about to all the masked balls and to the theatre, accompanied by men only," wrote Mme. de Motteville; "taking the first carriages she met." Everybody felt relieved when she finally departed for Toulon and Rome, where she dwelt for thirty years longer, dropping more and more into oblivion.

The Galerie des Cerfs, originally built in the reign of Henri IV, was restored under Napoleon I and Louis XVIII. An inscribed tablet marks the place where Monaldeschi fell in his last death-struggle. Close by is the coat of mail, torn by the swords which mortally wounded him. In the parish church the stone which covers his remains still bears the words, "Cy gist Monaldexi."

MARIE, HENRIETTE AND LOUISE
(A TRIO OF FAIR WOMEN)

CHAPTER IX

MARIE, HENRIETTE AND LOUISE

(A TRIO OF FAIR WOMEN)

ALL those who were fair and bright and joyous at the Court of France foregathered with the young king at Fontainebleau. Never at one time had the palace witnessed greater animation, fresher and more sparkling beauty, or more brilliancy. Fortune had prepared a glorious future for her petted darling, Louis XIV, upon whom she had showered all her best gifts except the knowledge of using them to the advantage of others as well as of himself. He was handsome, athletic, graceful, ardent, nay, irresistible. Innumerable beings surrounded him ready to worship his qualities, to fall under their spell, even to risk being scorched and seared by their agency. The air of Fontainebleau was intoxicating. A spark of passion ignited heart after heart and youth ran riot in the veins of the gay company. Dreadful things might have happened had the restraining influence of the queen-mother been relaxed. By the aid of faithful attendants, among them Mme. de Motteville,

she exercised a constant supervision. The watchdogs did their utmost to keep law and order and preserve at least the appearances of decency. But the madcap devotees of pleasure, girls and boys still most of them, were insatiable, cared nothing for moderation and seemliness, and rushed on apace to drink recklessly of life's best offerings. No fairy palace could have provided better resources for enjoyment than Fontainebleau ; no background could have thrown romance into such high relief as the mysterious forest alleys where the foliage rustled in whispers of love. No women could have tempted man to err more cunningly than the bevy of Court beauties who fluttered like dainty moths half-willing, half-fearing, round and round, closer and ever closer, to the central light, their sovereign.

Among them was a young girl, dark-eyed, ill-favoured, but passionate and bewitching. Gipsy-like looks were allied to a tempestuous nature. The fascination which Marie de Mancini possessed for Louis was in the nature of a spell. Nieces to Mazarin, she and her sisters had been brought up at the Palais Royal with the little princes. Louis XIV promptly fell in love with the eldest of the Italian girls, Olympe, who realized that his attentions were not likely to confer lasting benefits upon her. She was clear-headed enough to demand solid advantages for her future, and compromised as well as she was able by marrying the

Comte de Soissons, and retaining as much of the king's interest as she could. It was therefore with but ill-concealed jealousy that she witnessed his growing interest in her younger sister Marie, then a rather gauky girl of seventeen, who had been overwhelmed with grief because the king was nigh unto death. The latter was unable to restrain the frenzy and excitement of the anguish which possessed her, and forgetful of etiquette and maidenly modesty, allowed the whole Court to witness her despair and anxiety. "When he was convalescent," wrote Mme. de la Fayette of the king, "all the world spoke to him of Mlle. de Mancini's grief; perhaps she may even have spoken of it to him herself. Indeed she showed so much passion, breaking through all the restraint imposed upon her by the queen-mother and the Cardinal, that one might say she constrained the king to love her." The same author gave a far from flattering portrait of this young woman. "There was no charm about her person and very little in her wit," she wrote, "although she possessed plenty. She was bold, resolute, violent, rather free in her manners, and far removed from every kind of civility and politeness."¹ In truth Marie was a firebrand and full of wild and dangerous impulses. She had the untamed blood of the south in her veins and was quite capable of awakening every ounce of passion latent in Louis's

¹ Mme. de la Fayette, *Histoire d'Henriette d'Angleterre*.

character. He was enslaved rather than enamoured. She was an obsession and he could not free his mind of her nor keep away from her side. Once removed from her presence, although the vision of her jet-black hair, her olive skin and flashing coal-black eyes remained with him, he forgot the musical notes of her low-pitched voice, into which she could throw pathos and seduction ; he forgot her dare-devil pranks and her provocative allurements. He was saved by his egoism, for his real interests were centred in his most important self, and on her side the stormy affection she lavished upon him emanated from the brain rather than the heart.

Nevertheless, their mutual attraction was sincere and violent whilst it lasted, remaining at its height through the autumn of 1658 and early in 1659. When sitting near her whilst she read the heroic and amorous writings of Gomberville, La Calprenède, or Mlle. de Scudéry, or recited Corneille's poetry in her resonant voice ; when riding beside her through sunshine, wind and storm, Louis began to wonder seriously whether he had met his fate and whether his marriage with the witch Marie would become an accomplished fact. This thought intruded even more readily when the Court moved to Fontainebleau, where there were many facilities for love-making.

Amusements of all kinds were organized. *Fêtes*

and balls, French and Italian comedies, water-parties and picnics, boating in the moonlight to the sound of violins, galloping through leafy glades—

“ . . . diverses réjouissances,
 Les muzes, les dames, les dances,
 Les fruits, les fleurs et les bouquets,
 Les colations et banquets,
 Le théâtre, les sérénades,
 Les chasses et les promenades.”¹

La Grande Mademoiselle was amongst those staying at the palace. She arrived later than the others, but just in time to be present at a banquet given by the little Monsieur at “a hermitage called Franchard, where twenty-four violins were in attendance. We went on horseback, and in our riding-habits, with liveries,” she wrote. “When we arrived they took a fancy to scramble amongst the rocks—the most inconvenient in the world! and where you would have supposed nothing but goats could find footing. The king was accompanied in this perilous adventure by Marie de Mancini, and the Marquis d’Alluye helped Marie’s friend, Mlle. du Fouilloux. When they had reached the top, Louis, in a mischievous frame of mind, sent for the rest of the party. We were obliged to obey,” continued Mademoiselle, “though it was not without difficulty; and we were no sooner resolved to venture than we found

¹ Loret, *La Muze Historique*. August 24, 1658.

ourselves obliged to return. I am surprised that no one was hurt, for we ran the greatest risk of having our arms and legs broken, and even of fracturing our skulls. I think that the prayers of the good hermit must have preserved us. After supper we returned *en calèche* accompanied by a number of men bearing torches, and, on our arrival, went to the play."

The intimacy between the king and Marie de Mancini had ripened rapidly during this stay at Fontainebleau. Both the queen and Mazarin regarded the affair as a childish and harmless flirtation. Marie admits in her Memoirs, however, that there was something more serious between them. "The king's kindness was so great that we lived on terms of familiarity with both him and Monsieur, and since their familiarity permitted me to say what I thought with a certain degree of freedom, perhaps I said it with some agreeableness. I continued still to do the same during a visit that the Court paid to Fontainebleau (for we followed it everywhere) and, on my return from this visit, I perceived that I did not displease the king, as I had already sufficient knowledge to understand that eloquent silence which often persuades more than all the fine speeches in the world."

Meanwhile the queen-mother, regardless of this "eloquent silence," was conducting negotiations for the king's marriage, having three possible

brides in view. Realizing that Marie de Mancini was likely to form a stumbling-block to the interest she wished Louis to feel in her plans for settling him in life, she approached Mazarin with a request that his niece should be removed from Court, at least for some time. The Cardinal agreed, and it was decided to send Marie away to the Castle of Brouage near La Rochelle. No one could have foreseen the storm of savage anger of which this ill-controlled young woman was capable. She wept, she raved, she threatened until she infected the king with her own despair. But he was powerless and he let her go. Their parting was not without a fine moment of tragedy ; a comparison has often been made between the words used by Marie and those of Bérénice when she parted from Titus in Racine's play, *Bérénice* : "Sire, you are king, and you love me. Yet you weep and you let me go."

For the moment Marie de Mancini disappears from the story of Fontainebleau to give place to the young queen.

Louis was carried out of himself by the excitement of the arrangements for his marriage. To him the Infanta of Spain, his finally selected bride, appeared to possess all the attractions and qualities that he had hoped to find in his future wife. She was certainly of a sweet and passive nature and devoted to her husband, but she was dull, and of a sluggish temperament ; her intellect was not only

poor, but untrained, her interests were hardly wider than those centring in the daily duties of eating and dressing, her tastes were strictly Spanish, and she was quite unreceptive to French ideas.

The most interesting description of Marie-Thérèse is from the pen of the Princess Palatine, Monsieur's second wife, who as usual was not entirely unprejudiced.

"She was certainly excessively silly, but the best and most virtuous woman on earth ; she had grandeur, and she knew well how to hold a Court. She believed all the king told her, good and bad. Her accoutrements were ridiculous ; and her teeth were black and decayed, which came, they said, from eating chocolate, and she also ate a great deal of garlic. She was clumsy and short, and had a very white skin ; when she neither danced nor walked she looked taller than she was. She ate frequently, and was very long about it, because it was always in little scraps as if for a canary. She never forgot her native land, and many of her ways were Spanish. She loved cards beyond measure, and played at bassette, reversi and ombre, sometimes at petit prime, but she never won, because she could never learn to play well."¹

The marriage took place in June 1660. The young couple soon visited Fontainebleau, "whither," said La Grande Mademoiselle, "came a world of people, for all wished to see the new

¹ Correspondence of the Princess Palatine.

queen." Amongst the crowd which thronged to the palace to welcome the royal bride was the enigmatic Marie de Mancini, by that time suffering a new and fiery passion for Prince Charles de Lorraine. Louis heard at Fontainebleau that another had taken his place in her heart, and no doubt he felt duly mortified. Thereupon, in revenge, he spoke to her coldly and praised the charms of Marie-Thérèse. Marie de Mancini gave an account of the first meeting with Louis in her *Memoirs*: "The Court reached Fontainebleau," she wrote, "and the Cardinal ordered us to pay our respects to the new queen. I foresaw all that this would cost me and it was not without anguish I accepted it. . . . I had not imagined that the king could receive me with the coldness and indifference he displayed." A year later she was married to the Connétable Colonna and left the French Court. One romantic adventure connects her with Fontainebleau more than ten years later. Her career had been chequered and troubled. In 1672 she escaped from Rome with her sister Hortense, dressed in men's clothing, and after a journey full of vicissitudes reached France and appealed to the king. Louis advised her to shut herself up "in order to put an end to the scandal" her departure from Rome had caused. She set off post-haste to Fontainebleau instead, followed by a certain M. de la Gibetière, who was dispatched by the king in order to interview her and if possible bring her

to reason. A scene between the two took place in the upper chamber of an inn in the village, but the messenger never delivered his carefully arrayed rebuke. Marie, with something of her old girlish impetuosity and power, snatched up her guitar and played with such vigour that La Gibetière found himself perforce obliged to retire.

Less than a year passed after Louis XIV's marriage before the Court was again at Fontainebleau, this time for a long stay. Hopes were being entertained of an heir to the throne, and the palace had not yet lost the reputation of being the most suitable among the royal residences for interesting events of this character.

Louis was by this time wearying of his stolid wife ; he preferred a companion with more life and *verve*, and one who was interesting and delightful in every way was present in the palace in the person of Henriette, wife of the little Monsieur. This young lady, then aged sixteen, had had a romantic career from the day of her birth at Exeter in 1644 at a critical moment of the civil war, and whilst her mother's poverty was so great that Anne of Austria sent money and clothes as well as help in the person of Mme. Péronne, nurse of Louis XIV. Daughter of Charles I and Queen Henrietta Maria, she was smuggled to France, where her mother was already exiled, disguised in a shabby suit of boy's clothes. There also poverty was endured for a time, and occasions were known

when the little Henriette had to spend the day in bed because there was no money for firing. In 1655, when she was eleven years old, she made a public appearance at the Louvre, where Anne of Austria was giving a ball. The king, at that time, intensely interested in the Mancini family, offered his hand to the Duchesse de Mercœur their cousin, and for this breach of etiquette the queen sternly rebuked him, bidding him dance first with the Princess of England. At this point Queen Henrietta interfered, saying that her little daughter had hurt her foot and could not dance—a subterfuge which did not greatly help matters, for Anne of Austria immediately insisted that Louis and Henriette should sit out the dance together. Perhaps this prejudiced the king against his cousin, marriage with whom he never cared to contemplate, although at one time the project was seriously discussed. He did not like little girls, and Henriette was so thin that when a marriage was at last arranged between her and the little Monsieur, Louis teased his brother, saying he need not be in such a hurry to marry the bones of the Holy Innocents. Three years later her undeniable charm made itself already felt, if we may judge from a descriptive sketch written by Mme. de Brégis in 1658.

“To begin with her height, I must tell you that this young princess is still growing. Her air is as noble as her birth; her hair is of a bright chestnut hue, and her complexion rivals that of the

gayest flowers. The snowy whiteness of her skin betrays the lilies from which she sprang. Her eyes are blue and brilliant, her lips ruddy, her throat beautiful, her arms and hands well made. Her charms show that she was born on a throne, and is destined to return there."

In which prophecy she was mistaken. But if Louis was shortsighted with regard to Henriette's developing beauty Monsieur was quite the reverse. The effeminate dandy, who thought of very little beyond his own personal appearance and comfort, decided it would be a fine thing to be married and have an establishment of his own. When he gave voice to these aspirations Louis chaffed him unmercifully, saying, "Cheer up! You will marry the Princess of England, for no one else will have her." Perhaps this gave little Philippe the idea, perhaps he fell genuinely in love with his charming cousin; at all events, no sooner was the Court at Fontainebleau, where she had journeyed with her mother to be presented to the young queen, than he hastened to pay her his addresses. Monsieur was twenty years old, as pretty as a picture, and on the death of Gaston, his uncle, was made Duc d'Orléans, de Valois and de Chartres. He was altogether a brilliant match, and the fact that Charles II had been established on the throne of England made this alliance with his sister suitable in every way. The marriage was celebrated on March 30, 1661, at the Palais Royal.

The weddings of Marie de Mancini to Colonna, and of Mlle. d'Orléans, half-sister of La Grande Mademoiselle, to the Grand-Duke of Tuscany were also solemnized in the spring, and soon afterwards the Court went to Fontainebleau, the new Grand-Duchess of Tuscany being *fêted* there before her departure from France.

Henriette and Philippe stayed behind for a time at the Tuileries, where the former established a circle of friends, among them some of the wittiest and most beautiful women of the day, such as the widowed Duchesse de Châtillon, called Bablon by Henriette, with whom the king was said to have been in love, the Duchesse de Créqui, Mlle. de Mortemart, soon to be known as Mme. de Montespan, Mme. de Valentinois, sister to the Comte de Guiche, Marguerite de la Trémouille and Madeleine de la Vergne, known better as Mme. de la Fayette and biographer of Madame.

Before long the couple left the Tuileries to follow the Court to Fontainebleau. "Without being of the age or sentiments of young people of fifteen," wrote Mme. de Motteville, "I had never seen the Court more beautiful than it seemed to me then. . . . Balls, comedies, excursions in open carriages, and hunts were frequent. In short, nothing that could divert and amuse was lacking during this charming sojourn. The different courts and the various gardens of Fontainebleau seemed fairy palaces and gardens, and its desert

places Elysian fields." Henriette's arrival was the signal for an outbreak of festivities. There was a goodly company at the palace, at its head the queen-mother, now nearly sixty years of age, still charming and with something of the freshness of youth about her; the young queen, who was said to love retirement rather more than she should have loved it, seeing that as Queen of France she owed herself to the public; the king, ready for every kind of frolic and folly; Monsieur, amiable and pleasant, in his element among the crowd of princesses and Court ladies, maids of honour and charming visitors; La Grande Mademoiselle; the Comtesse de Soissons, now mistress of the queen's household; Mme. de Motteville, ready to play the faithful watch-dog; Mlle. de la Vallière, soon to be brought into unfortunate prominence; Mlle. de la Mothe, Mlle. de Pons, and fifty others. Henriette was the central figure of all, with her inexhaustible vivacity and gaiety, passion for amusement, utter scorn of conventionalities, etiquette or ceremonial, ready to set the grand canal on fire, or camp out with Louis XIV alone in the forest, if it would cause her half-an-hour's fun and shock the Court. Everybody loved her and she gave herself up with grace and ardour to be courted and *fêted* by every one. "Never was there a princess so fascinating and so ready to please all who approached her," was the Abbé de Choisy's opinion. "Her whole person seemed full of charm. You feel interested

in her, you loved her without being able to help yourself. When any one looked at her and she perceived his glances it appeared as though she had no other desire in the world but that of pleasing him alone. She had all the wit necessary to make a woman appear charming, and all the talent needful to conduct important affairs had circumstances arisen in which she could have made use of it, but pleasure was the order of the day at Court."

Undoubtedly Madame possessed the power of captivating all who approached her, and the king was not an exception; he looked back with astonishment at the days when he had treated her with neglect, and paid all the more tribute to her charms because he had been so long in discovering them. He was soon on terms of great intimacy with his sister-in-law, visiting her every day and doing all he could to entertain her. They had very much the same tastes. "She was arranging all the entertainments. They were organized for her, and the king only enjoyed those that pleased her," wrote Mme. de la Fayette. "It was the middle of summer; Madame went out bathing every day. She started in a carriage, on account of the heat, and returned on horseback, followed by all the ladies, elegantly dressed, with waving plumes in their hats, accompanied by the king and all the Court gallants. After supper they drove along the grassy banks of the canal in little carriages, to the sound of violins."

These pleasures and excursions lasted far into the night, sometimes until two and three o'clock in the morning, so that they "wore quite an air of gallantry." The queen-mother became annoyed by Louis's constant attendance upon his sister-in-law. Queen Henrietta, too, grew uneasy, and "having seen ladies who have just come from Fontainebleau," wrote to Mme. de Motteville begging her to keep an eye on her madcap little daughter. But the young people heeded none of these warnings. The gaieties and entertainments were in full swing.

On May 8 the king gave a water *fête* for Madame "in galiots with a flourish of trumpets." After the excursion there was an elaborate banquet. The same day La Grande Mademoiselle arrived, and also the new Grand-Duchess of Tuscany. In the evening there was a boating-party on the canal and a performance of French comedy. The next day the king, Monsieur and Madame called on Mademoiselle in her apartments, and in the evening a ball was given. The following morning a hunting-party took place, and afterwards boating on the canal to the performance of entrancing music arranged by Lulli, who was appointed two days later Superintendent and Composer to the king. On the 22nd of the month an excursion was arranged to the Hermitage, the favourite part of the forest, where a magnificent collation was served for the queens,

Madame, the princesses and maids of honour to the royal household. On the 25th Monsieur gave a ball, on the 27th a hunting-party. The gaieties were continued in June with equal splendour. On the 3rd Louis opened a ball with Madame, who in the interval had been to Colombes, greatly to his grief. He rode as far as the Hermitage to meet her on her return. On the 11th there was an equestrian excursion, followed by a ball; three days later another ball, this time in the open air. One was given by the Duc de Beaufort, one by the Duc de Saint-Aignan, a third by the Duc d'Enghien, followed by a torchlight procession.

At the same time rehearsals were taking place for the Ballet des Saisons, in which everybody who was anybody among the young folk took part. The performance was fixed for July 23. The argument was as follows—

The subject of this ballet is drawn from the sylvan spot in which it is held. The delightful deserts of Fontainebleau now being the resort of the finest Court ever known, the people who dwell there give vent to their joy in a concert in which shepherds and fauns intermingle. Diana and her nymphs, drawn to these forests by the delights of the chase, will appear in due course. The seasons follow consecutively, each one set in different scenery, thus forming the *entrées du ballet*. The last season, on account of its cheerlessness and

unfruitfulness, will be cast forth by the return of eternal spring, which shall reign perpetually in this delightful spot.

The performance took place in the evening. Madame was Diana ; Louis played Ceres and Spring. The verse was by Benserade, the music by Lulli. The stage was raised on a grassy lawn at the edge of the lake. The noble avenues on either side were lighted by thousands of torches, and the ornamental waters of the gardens were beautifully illuminated. A troop of fair-haired girls strewed flowers on the grass and sang praises of Diana. Then Madame appeared, the silver crescent on her brow, the bow and quiver beside her. Ten of the Court ladies robed in green sang a chorus in her praise. Among them were the Duchesse de Valentinois, Mlle. de la Mothe, Mlle. de la Vallière, and Mlle. de Pons. The different seasons of the year offered their homage at the Court of Diana. The king himself was Spring, with Joy, Laughter and Abundance in his train. He sank on one knee before Madame, naming her Queen of Beauty. Her triumph was complete.

There could no longer be a doubt that matters were going too far between the king and Monsieur's wife. Everybody was talking of it. Anne of Austria spoke sternly ; Monsieur himself complained bitterly. Things were exceedingly uncomfortable and had come to such a pass that the two chief actors in this little drama laid their heads

together to concoct a plan by which they might put every one off the scent, and quite unwittingly thereby hatched a real and genuine scandal which had the gravest results for at least one party concerned. Anxious above all things to turn public attention from themselves, they decided that the best way to do so would be for the king to pretend to be in love with somebody else. Of three or four young women selected for this purpose, gentle little Louise de la Vallière was thought to be the most suitable. She was young, innocent, sweet and sincere, and not at all ugly. She seemed fitted in every way to bear the burden of a harmless and amusing intrigue. Then the unexpected happened—most unexpected of all by Henriette. Louise, genuinely trusting, loving and romantic, let the king see that he had conquered her whole heart, whereupon, Louis, absolutely overcome by this proof that he was loved purely and for himself alone, reciprocated with a deep passion on his side. Now, indeed, trouble loomed ahead.

The story told of the beginning of this *liaison* was pretty but inaccurate. Louise and her companions, tradition said, went into the woods one evening, and the king followed with several courtiers in his train. The ladies seated themselves on the grass, the king approached softly accompanied only by his equerry Beringhen. Unseen behind a large tree he listened to their talk. They discussed the

ballet, praised the dresses, and compared notes about the handsome nobles who had danced in it. "One declared for the Marquis d'Alincour, another for M. d'Armagnac, another for the Comte de Guiche, all the lords of the Court were mentioned, but no one spoke of the king. Happily, there was one among those ladies who said nothing. Her companions rallied her upon her reserve, she answered only by a disdainful silence. They pressed her to explain herself. 'Alas !' said she, suffering a sigh to escape her, 'how is it possible to look at those men when the king is present ?' 'What !' cried they, 'then it is a king only that can please you ?' 'No,' answered she, 'the crown adds nothing to the loveliness of his person, it even lessens the danger of beholding him ; if he was not a king he would be too formidable to a heart that is not insensible ; but as it is, he inspires a dislike of every one but himself.'"

Nothing could have been more foreign to the real nature of Louise, compared as she has been to the modest violet, thus to wear her heart upon her sleeve. The legend proceeds to tell how the king, charmed by these sentiments, could not rest until he had discovered the name of the one who had uttered them.

To the Abbé de Choisy, who knew her in her childhood, we owe perhaps the most delightful portrait of the woman who will always be regarded as among the most lovable and romantic figures in

French history. "Mlle. de la Vallière," he wrote, "was not one of those beauties who arouse admiration without kindling love. . . . She had a fine skin, fair hair, a winning smile, blue eyes, and a glance so tender and at the same time so modest that it won both heart and respect at the same moment. Moreover, she had too little spirit . . . no ambition, no views. She spent more time in dreaming of him she loved than in endeavouring to please him, being entirely wrapped up in herself and in her passion, which was the only passion of her life; preferring honour before everything, and exposing herself more than once to a risk of death rather than allowing anybody to suspect her frailty. She was gentle in temper and timid; never able to forget that she had done wrong, she desired ceaselessly to return to the strait path."

When the king's new passion reached the ears of Anne of Austria she was greatly distressed. She taxed her son with his indiscretion, begging him to keep the truth from the queen and warning him that he was placing himself in the power of evil-minded people who would intrigue to injure him when they knew of the affair. Mme. de Motteville was consulted, but to little purpose; the faithful watch-dog who had helped in removing Mlle. de Pons from Fontainebleau to Paris out of danger because the king "seemed not to dislike her" was powerless in this instance. She had

only good to speak of Louise. "She was amiable," she wrote, "and her beauty had great charms from the dazzling white and rose of her complexion, the blue of her eyes, which had much sweetness, and the beauty of her blonde hair, which increased that of her face." Undoubtedly the queen-mother and her devoted henchwoman were at their wits' end to put a stop to the gallantries and intrigues which sprang up in a fruitful crop at Fontainebleau. The Comte de Guiche flirted with Henriette and was sent away. Then his sister became Madame's favourite and made so much mischief that she too had to leave. "Madame could not live without her," wrote the now harassed Mme. de Motteville, "making her take part in all the excursions ; and every day she brought to bloom—not flowers beneath her feet, as the poets feign of the nymphs of the chaste Diana, but quarrels, misunderstandings, and all those nothings which are capable of producing great events."

Unable to drag her son from the side of his mistress, Anne of Austria devoted herself chiefly to guarding the queen. All through the late summer and early autumn, whilst Louis and Louise were oblivious of all else in their consuming mutual passion, Marie-Thérèse calmly awaited the birth of a dauphin and incidentally remained, for the most part, absorbed in her devotions. At seven minutes to twelve on November 1 the heir to the throne was

born, and the young king in the delights of fatherhood remembered his neglected wife. "We were walking in the Cour Ovale," wrote De Choisy, "when the king opened the window of his room and himself announced the joyful event, crying out loud, 'The queen has given birth to a boy.' Fires were lighted everywhere ; Spanish comedians danced a ballet in the Cour de la Fontaine, before the balcony of the queen-mother's apartments, with castanets, harps and guitars." All the fountains ran wine, the park was illuminated, prisoners were set free, and the poor received alms.

Louis's interest in the mother of his heir did not last long. In the middle of December he hurried to Paris in search of Mlle. de la Vallière, who had returned there in the train of Madame. The tragic story of the "little violet hiding humbly under the grass, who was so ashamed to be a mistress, to be a mother, to be a duchess," belongs only in part to Fontainebleau. In 1664 she was there again, more openly acknowledged now, and the king's *fêtes* all arranged in her honour. Madame was there too, and gave birth to the Duc de Valois on July 16. La Grande Mademoiselle was also at Court, and wrote in her Memoirs, "The king took me with him upon the canal, where he had a performance of music, intended more for Mlle. de la Vallière than for the rest of the spectators : for she was then in the height of favour."

For three short years her troubles had been

mitigated by at least some happiness : in the time to come she was to suffer almost unrelieved grief. The years 1665 and 1666 made great changes in the king's character. The death of Anne of Austria freed him from all restraint. He began to think of other things besides love ; of his country, of war, and of glory. In 1666, when the Court was at Fontainebleau, his time was occupied with reviewing his troops, and for the moment intrigue was forgotten. Even La Grande Mademoiselle, who was usually much interested in Court gossip, occupied herself with the soldiers, because, forsooth, she discovered Lauzun amongst them, and cast a favourable eye upon him. The king, she wrote, " ordered his troops to encamp at Fontainebleau during the time he was there with the Court. . . . He had observed that, above all his troops, the dragoons had served the best ; so the name of the regiment '*La Ferté*' was changed to that of the '*Regiment du Roi*.' " The king placed the Marquis de Puyguilhem, afterwards Comte de Lauzun, at the head of it ; and the dragoons were ordered to take up a position between the Mall and the Park at Fontainebleau so that the ladies might see their manœuvres ; " every one admired the address with which it went through the different exercises." Of Lauzun she wrote, " I perceived him to be *un homme de bon esprit*, and I liked to converse with him ; so much was I attracted by his reputation as *honnête homme* and *homme singulier*."



LOUISE DE LA VALLIÈRE.

From a painting of French School, XVII. Century, at Versailles.

By permission of Braun, Clément & Co., Dornach and Paris.

To Yvett
Anderson

The consequences of Mademoiselle's injudicious infatuation for Lauzun are well known, and have no place in the story of Fontainebleau. Henriette also disappears suddenly. She died at Saint-Cloud in 1670, pleading pathetically to Monsieur that she had never wronged him. The wedding of her daughter, Marie-Louise, with Charles II of Spain, "the crowned imbecile," took place at Fontainebleau in 1679. The poor bride was in love with the dauphin, and Louis XIV, seeing her grief, sought to justify his action in compelling her to such a marriage. "I could not have done better for my own daughter," he said kindly. "Ah!" she replied, "but surely you might have done differently for your niece."

Mlle. de la Vallière, her beauty and her sweetness unimpaired by unparalleled trials, buried her sins and sorrows in the Convent of the Carmelites—not before she had suffered for seven long, weary years at the hands of a woman who had been her friend and became her rival. Fontainebleau had been to her a place of sugared sweetness, swiftly melting into nothingness, and leaving sorrow and bitterness to the taste. For thirty years she passed her days in penitence. Almost her last worldly thought before she became a Carmelite was concerned with her rival, Mme. de Montespan, and the king. "When I am troubled by anything at the Carmelite Convent," she remarked, "I shall recall the sufferings which those two persons inflicted upon me."

Elisabeth-Charlotte, the shrewd Princess Palatine, who married Monsieur a year after the death of Henriette, wrote kindly of Louise, though her pen was often dipped in pungent ink. She was unfair to Louis perhaps when she accused him of absolute oblivion of this his first sincere passion.

"The king," she wrote, "forgot La Vallière as completely as if he had never seen her or known her in his life. She had as many virtues as the Montespan had vices. The sole weakness that she had for the king was very excusable. The king was young, gallant and handsome, she herself very young ; all the world led her and drove her to her fault. At bottom she was modest and virtuous, with a most kind heart. I told her sometimes that she had transposed her love and carried to God just that which she had for the king. They did her the utmost injustice in accusing her of loving any one but the king—but lies cost the Montespan nothing. It was at her instigation that the king so ill-treated La Vallière. The poor creature's heart was pierced, but she fancied she was offering the greatest sacrifice to God in immolating to Him the source of her sin on the very spot where the sin was committed. Therefore she stayed on, as penance, with the Montespan."

And when at length release came and she found peace between the convent walls, the woman who had wronged her reigned supreme in her imperious beauty.

**MME. DE MONTESPAN AND
MME. DE MAINTENON
(PASSION AND PIETY)**

CHAPTER X

MME. DE MONTESPAN AND MME. DE MAINTENON

(PASSION AND PIETY)

THE charm, the vivacity, the gorgeousness and splendour of Mme. de Montespan were nothing dimmed by the torrent of denunciation by which she was pursued. In the long list of king's mistresses she stands first in physical bloom and perfection. Mme. de Pompadour alone wielded more power by virtue of her superior intellectual gifts, but she could not excel her in fascination and alluring influence. "He does not really love me," said Mme. de Montespan of the king, "but he thinks it a duty he owes to himself to have the most beautiful woman in his kingdom for his mistress." Louis, it is true, did not offer her the sentimental affection he had bestowed upon La Vallière, but he gloried in possessing her, and her ascendancy coincides in point of time with the period of his victories, his supremacy, his unrivalled renown.

The reign of La Vallière lasted six years, that of Mme. de Montespan was to endure twice as long. Born in 1641 at the Château of Tonnay

Charente, Françoise Athénais de Rochechouart-Mortemart, daughter of Gabriel de Rochechouart, was married on January 28, 1663, to Louis Henri de Pardaillan de Gondrin, Marquis de Montespan. The array of names is as imposing as everything else about Mme. de Montespan. Her residences, her grand carriages, her jewellery, her gorgeous gowns, her mounted escort, her apartments, her numerous servants, her children, who received the honours due to legitimate sons and daughters of France—in short, all things appertaining to her were bewilderingly magnificent.

Her early married life was not happy. Pecuniary difficulties assailed the young couple and increased as time went on. To have to scheme and to borrow money in order to obtain things which she regarded as actual necessities of life was not at all to this exquisite young person's taste. She had only to glance at the Court around her to see that her beauty transcended that of any other woman present, and that admirers in plenty were waiting until she should condescend to shower favours upon them. Calculating and ambitious, she desired the highest market of all for her charms. She had eyes only for the king. Because the king's eyes were still turned upon La Vallière, she, too, busied herself in showing friendship in this quarter. The peony associated with the violet. Sweet as was the scent of the latter flower, the gaudy bloom of the former was sooner or later

bound to attract the greater share of the king's attention. When La Vallière at length discovered who it was that had usurped the affections she coveted above all else—it took her some little time to awaken to her friend's treachery—she resigned her claim upon the king almost without a struggle. Women of her type do not fight, they murmur and bow to the inevitable. Mme. de Montespan, mother of two children, much hampered by a jealous husband, was known to be the king's mistress, and in spite of her husband's objections she remained at Court and followed Louis to Fontainebleau, to Compiègne, even to the seat of war. M. de Montespan, indeed, was a constant source of disquietude. He advertised his wrongs on every possible occasion and courted scenes with Louis himself. He confided in La Grande Mademoiselle, who was a distant relative, and gained the support of his uncle, who was Archbishop of Sens, and who went so far, it was said, as to box the ears of the frail lady in question. Fontainebleau was in the archbishop's diocese, and to show his disapproval of what was going on he made a point of sentencing to public penance a woman who was leading an immoral life much on the same lines as his niece by marriage. As the Court was then staying at the palace this action on the part of the archbishop could only be construed to mean one thing, and Louis, angry at the barely veiled hint, commanded the archbishop

to remain at Sens and not to appear at Fontainebleau. The retort to this was that the king had no right to interfere with episcopal functions, followed by a threat of excommunication if the king did not mend his ways. Thereupon Mme. de Montespan, realizing that Louis still retained great respect for ecclesiastical authority, decided to leave Fontainebleau, and did not return there until the death of the archbishop in 1674.

Soon afterwards she rose to her greatest heights. "Her circle," wrote Saint-Simon, "became the centre of the Court, of the amusements, of the hopes and of the fears of ministers and the generals, and the humiliation of all France. It was also the centre of wit, and of a kind so peculiar, so delicate, and so subtle, but always so natural and so agreeable, that it made itself distinguished by its special character."

Mme. de Sévigné described the favourite in 1676 in a letter to her daughter: "Seriously, her beauty is an astonishing thing, her figure is not half so stout as it was, whilst neither her complexion, nor her eyes, nor her lips are less fine. She was dressed entirely in *point de France*; her hair arranged in a thousand curls; two falling from her temples low upon her cheeks; black ribbons adorned her head, and the pearls of the Maréchale de l'Hôpital, besides diamond clasps and pendants of the most perfect lustre, three or four jewelled pins, no coif, in a word, a triumphant loveliness

which threw all the ambassadors into a fever of admiration." Another costume of Mme. de Montespan's was described by Mme. de Sévigné as "a robe of gold cloth on a gold ground, with a double gold border, embroidered with one sort of gold blended with another sort, which makes the finest gold stuff ever invented by the wit of man or contrived by fairies in secret." The grandeur of the mistress, indeed, was far beyond that of the queen, who took quite a secondary position, having inferior apartments in all the palaces, and far less splendour when she travelled. Mme. de Montespan, moreover, begged the king to have the queen's maids of honour dismissed. They were replaced by *dames de palais*, who were elderly and not good-looking. A number of details concerning the favourite's importance at this time are given by Mme. de Sévigné. She travelled in state to Bourbon just in front of the latter lady, who was on her way to Vichy to take the waters. "We closely follow in the footsteps of Mme. de Montespan, and at every place we are told what she said, what she did, what she ate and how she slept. She is in a carriage with six horses, and the little Thianges is with her; another carriage follows, drawn by a similar number of horses, and containing six of her women; she has two sumpter-wagons, six mules and ten or twelve cavaliers on horseback, without reckoning her officers; her train consists of about forty-five people."

When the favourite left Moulins to meet the king on his return from war she set out "in a boat beautifully painted and gilded, and decorated with crimson damask. It had been prepared for her by the Intendant, who had it adorned with a thousand devices and colours of France and Navarre. Nothing could have been finer ! The cost of it was more than a thousand crowns ; but he was amply repaid for his outlay by a letter which the fair one wrote to the king, in which she spoke of nothing but all this magnificence." Every step in the growing importance of the haughty beauty came to the knowledge of Mme. de Sévigné, and every stage in the subsequent decay of her influence was noted. At the end of the month the latter returned from Vichy to Paris, breaking her journey among other places at Fontainebleau, where she slept at the house of M. de Saint-Hérem, who was then Governor of the Palace. His abode was part of the palace buildings. Mme. de Sévigné absolutely refused to stay at the "Lion d'Or," which she hated because she had parted from her daughter at that inn on May 27, 1675. "They speak a great deal of the infinite delights of Fontainebleau," she wrote some months later ; "Fontainebleau appears to me to be a dangerous place. It seems no more safe to remove old love affairs than it is to remove old people. The continuance of the attachment is often chiefly owing to habit ; when the scene changes it is in

danger of expiring." And in 1680 she was still more explicit. "They tell me that there is a whirl of pleasure there, but not a moment of joy. Mme. de Maintenon gains in favour all the time, whilst that of Mme. de Montespan diminishes visibly." The downfall of the favourite was not the sudden thing which appears at first sight to be the case from this ominous remark. Five years had passed since Mme. de Sévigné had given the first suggestion of it. Many of the stages in the descent occurred elsewhere than at Fontainebleau. The long struggle which took place in the king's soul between piety on the one hand as represented by Mme. de Maintenon and pleasure on the other as offered by Mme. de Montespan is a matter of common knowledge. Mme. Scarron, widow of the crippled poet, was appointed nurse and governess to the king's illegitimate children; Mme. Scarron began to ingratiate herself with the favourite. She quarrelled with her and yet was indispensable, calling upon the king to arbitrate between them. She was more to the children than their mother. At last Louis interested himself in the governess, of whom at first he had spoken in a deprecating manner, calling her "a great wit." Mme. Scarron, as an acknowledgment of her services, received the estate of Maintenon and was styled Marquise. Mme. de Montespan suspected her growing power and tried to get rid of her—too late, the "governess" was not to be shaken

off just when her chance was coming. Mme. de Montespan made mistakes and wearied the king. Mme. de Maintenon never fell into error, not even into indiscretion. Hidden beneath an unemotional exterior she showed, however, a tender heart. But the heart was governed always by her head, and not till the hour was ripe did she suddenly give vent to a flood of feeling, such noble feeling for his welfare that Louis was almost swept away by the force of it. He must renounce his passion for the favourite, he must turn to virtuous things. " 'Tis religion, 'tis my zeal for your glory that urges me to speak," cried piety, and presently she stood high in power and influence, while Mme. de Montespan slipped daily more and more into neglect. It was a great and long-sought victory, this of virtue over vice, and some of the stages of the drama were played out in the forest glades and gilded apartments of Fontainebleau. Step by step Mme. de Maintenon encroached upon the privileges which had been the favourite's. She received the visits from the king, she joined in the chase, she rode in his carriage, she received homage from the great. For a time the honours were divided. Mme. de Montespan, who loved the show and dazzle of Court life, was allowed, nay, ordered, to remain at Court. After Mass, which ended between one and two, the king went to her rooms. Later he paid a visit to Mme. de Maintenon, from ten until midnight he was again with his mistress.

All the Court was astonished when at length Mme. de Maintenon was lodged in an apartment near the king's and he passed part of every evening with her. Mme. de Montespan was told that Louis had been seen standing at one of the palace windows with her rival, "entertaining her with an easy familiar air and expressions of the highest tenderness." "Ah," replied the jealous mistress, "if they were married they would not be more fond of each other." She had spoken with insight. It is probable that the marriage was actually decided upon during a visit to the palace. No sooner had Marie-Thérèse breathed her last than Louis set out for Fontainebleau. Mme. de Maintenon followed him, as was her custom, "and appeared before the king in such deep mourning and with such an afflicted air that he, whose grief was over, could not prevent himself from joking on the subject." He also probably expressed his wishes for the future. "During this journey," said Mme. de Caylus, "I saw so much agitation in her mind that I judged it was caused by intense uncertainty of her position, her thoughts, her fears, her hopes—in one word, her heart was not free and her mind was very unquiet. In order to hide these different troubles and explain the tears which we saw her shed, she complained of vapours, and was going, she said, to seek a breath of air in the forest with Mme. de Montchevreuil. She went there sometimes at unseasonable hours. At

length the vapours passed, calm succeeded upon agitation, and this was at the end of the journey."

Mme. de Maintenon was not to remain uncertain for long. She obtained what she wished—a promise of marriage. Her position was soon defined; it was that of unacknowledged queen. For close on thirty years she ruled over a sobered king. Piety was doing its sombre work. If the early part of the reign was the gayest that Fontainebleau had ever known, the latter part was the dullest and gloomiest. The Court was there year after year. Mme. de Maintenon, with her usual powers of insistence, was presently installed in one of the best suites of apartments. Above the *Porte Dorée* her balcony commanded a view of the long avenue called by her name, which approached the palace from the forest. On one side of it lay the lake, on the other the *parterre*. She had five rooms, close to the *Galerie de Henri II*, which was the most important gallery in the palace. It was an improvement on the suite usually allotted to the favourites, which Mme. de Maintenon had occupied in her turn. Now she ruled supreme; here the king consulted her on affairs of State. She was friend, wife, counsellor, confessor, companion and judge in rotation. And she gloried in her high position, whilst she murmured against the exactions it imposed upon her. It is a tragic and moral lesson, that of Mme. de Maintenon sitting in her balcony-room at Fontainebleau, clinging to the position she and reached by her own exertions, yet loathing its

restraint. Apparently mistress of the palace, she was yet never more of a slave to existing conditions. All she asked for was to be free to visit her poor, and bestow money upon them, but this was frequently denied her. She was chained to that balcony-room until it was the king's pleasure to release her. The characteristics by which she had won him made her indispensable and necessary to him whenever he cared to call upon her.

"The king," wrote Mlle. d'Aumale, "found a great difference between the nature of Mme. de Maintenon and of Mme. de Montespan. The former was always modest, always mistress of herself, always reasonable, and united to these rare qualities, charms of wit and conversation. The king, ceasing to fear her, became accustomed to see her, and finally found he could not live without her."

"Mme. de Maintenon," wrote Saint-Simon, throwing further light on her exalted position, "was a woman of much wit. . . . The various positions she had held had rendered her flattering, insinuating, complaisant, always seeking to please. . . . Devoutness was her strong point ; by that she governed and held her place. . . . The power of Mme. de Maintenon was, as may be imagined, immense. She had everybody in her hands, from the highest and most favoured minister to the meanest subject of the realm."

And yet she was not happy. "I have seen her," wrote her niece, Mlle. d'Aumale, "quite

ready at times to leave the Court, but she said, 'It is my duty to stay where I am, and I am not mistress enough to leave. Why am I obliged to stay here, my God?' At other times she would say, 'Ah, if I could only leave this country!'

"The king always called her Madame; she had always the best rooms after those of the king. She was treated like a queen." But when any of the country people near Fontainebleau addressed her by the title of Your Majesty she blushed, saying, "Must I be flattered by every one like this?" She enjoyed being an "enigma for all the world, and an enigma for posterity."

From Fontainebleau she used to visit the poor at Avon, the neighbouring village, where she started a school for boys and one for girls. She taught the catechism herself, and gave money to those who learnt most quickly. Six girls were selected for special classes, and when they were proficient they were sent out to teach others. After their usual lessons were over they were ordered to present themselves at the palace sometimes on the chance of seeing her and receiving a few moments' extra instruction. Once she remarked to one of her pupils, "I half kill myself with fatigue at Avon; yet if I am now capable of enjoying any amusement it is in visiting my peasants. I am pleased with everything that passes in their houses; their conversation delights me; a trifle relieves their distress; a trifle excites their joy."

She had a small house at Fontainebleau called

"Mon Repos," where she occasionally provided meals for the poor. The furniture in it was her own. Her frequent cry was "Mes pauvres," and sometimes when she played cards and lost, in her regret she remarked, "Ah, mon Dieu, I could have given that amount to my poor." In her epitaph, composed by the Abbé de Verbot, and among the eulogies therein set forth, she was named "La mère des Pauvres." But these interests did not in any way interfere with her chief work, which lay with her Demoiselles at Saint-Cyr. When the king went hunting and the Duc du Maine prepared to go also, Mme. de Maintenon expressed a wish to set out for Saint-Cyr. "Nous allons chacun à nos passions," remarked the Duc du Maine. Her way of putting the matter was different. "Our stay lengthens on account of the pleasures of the hunt and fine weather," she wrote from Fontainebleau. "It is necessary to be here without a wish of one's own, and without other tastes than those of the master. In spite of that, however, my tastes do not take me stag-hunting."

Had it been possible they would have kept her indefinitely busied with good works at Avon, at "Mon Repos," and at Saint-Cyr. Instead she drove with the king, and often followed the chase in his carriage. Her letters addressed to friends from Fontainebleau are voluminous, and all tell the same tale of monotony, for life there and elsewhere was monotonous to her. The Memoirs of Dangeau filled in the thousand and one details which made

up the day's occupation at the palace. Saint-Simon gave colour to the same story. His descriptions were remarkably vivid. He depicted the discomfort of the journeys of the king and the Court to the country—

“When he [Louis XIV] travelled his coach was always full of women ; his mistresses, afterwards his bastards, his daughters-in law, sometimes Madame, and other ladies when there was room. In the coach, during his journeys, there were always all sorts of things to eat, as meat, pastry, fruit. . . . The king, who was fond of air, liked all the windows to be lowered ; he would have been much displeased had any lady drawn a curtain for protection against sun, wind or cold. . . . Mme. de Maintenon, who feared the air and many other inconveniences, could gain no privilege over the others. All she obtained, under pretence of modesty and other reasons, was permission to journey apart ; but whatever condition she might be in she was obliged to follow the king, and be ready to receive him in her rooms by the time he was ready to enter them. She made many journeys to Marly in a state such as would have saved a servant from movement. She made one to Fontainebleau when it seemed not unlikely that she would die on the road.”

Another descriptive passage concerned the king's taste for sylvan sport : “He went out for three objects : stag-hunting, once or more each week ; shooting in his parks (and no man handled

a gun with more grace or skill), once or twice a week ; and walking in his gardens for exercise, and to see his workmen. Sometimes he made picnics with ladies in the forest at Marly or at Fontainebleau, and in this last place, promenades with all the Court around the canal, which was a magnificent spectacle. . . . The stag-hunting parties were on an extensive scale. At Fontainebleau every one went who wished ; elsewhere only those were allowed to go who had obtained the permission once for all, and those who had obtained leave to wear the *just-au-corps*, which was a blue uniform with silver and gold lace, lined with red. . . . He amused himself at Fontainebleau during bad weather by seeing good players at tennis, in which he had formerly excelled."

In 1685 there were many hunting-parties. Monseigneur and Madame, Mme. la Duchesse de Bourbon, Mme. de Montespan, Mme. de Maintenon, and the Comtesse de Grammont were present. The other amusements at this time were French and Italian comedy, all kinds of games, such as billiards, reversi, lansquenet, ombre, bassette and tennis. There was high play at cards, in which Mme. de Maintenon did not join, but in which her rival took unceasing pleasure, losing sometimes as much as one hundred thousand crowns at one sitting. Bourdaloue denounced this gambling, calling it "Play without limit, and without regulation, which is no longer an amusement, but a business, a profession, a trade, a fascination, a

passion, nay, if I may say so, a rage and a madness." It was the quondam favourite's last passion, for the king visited her no more. She still had apartments in the palace, and in 1686 she, too, turned her attention to good works, building a home for orphans in the village of Fontainebleau, which was called the *Hopitalé de la Sainte-Famille*, where sixty little girls were taught religion, writing, sewing and lace-making. In that year Mme. la Duchesse de Bourbon, her daughter, and wife of Louis, Prince de Condé, had been taken ill with smallpox at Fontainebleau. Mme. de Montespan and the Grand Condé, her husband's grandfather, nursed her assiduously. Louis XIV, wishing to see the prince, went to his apartments, but Condé refused to admit him. Shortly afterwards the prince fell ill and died in the palace on December 11. The funeral honours, presided over by the Prince de Conti, took place at Fontainebleau on the 21st of the month, but the body was removed to the family vault. Mme. de Montespan remained with the Court for some years after the recovery of Mme. la Duchesse, but in 1691 she retired to the Convent of Saint-Joseph, rue Saint-Dominique, and died at Bourbon l'Archambault in 1707.

The Revocation of the Edict of Nantes was signed at the palace in 1685. In 1700 an important Council met to decide whether the Duc d'Anjou should or should not accept the throne of Spain.

Louis XIV arranged for the council to be held in the apartments of Mme. de Maintenon, and requested that lady, whom he called, not without justification, "Votre Solidité," to be present at the meeting. When asked for her opinion she expressed her conviction that the Duc d'Anjou should go to Spain, and this was the final decision of the king. Saint-Simon in his version of the affair emphasizes the general astonishment which was expressed at this proof of Mme. de Maintenon's power. The Duc d'Anjou became Philip V of Spain. "The news arrived at Court [Fontainebleau] in the month of November," wrote Saint-Simon. "The king was going out shooting that day, but upon learning what had taken place at once countermanded the sport, announced the death of the King of Spain, and at three o'clock held a council of the ministers in the apartments of Mme. de Maintenon. This council lasted until half-past seven o'clock in the evening. Monseigneur, who had been out wolf-hunting, returned in time to attend it. On the next morning, Wednesday, another council was held, and in the evening a third, in the apartments of Mme. de Maintenon. However accustomed persons were at Court to the favour Mme. de Maintenon enjoyed there, they were extremely surprised to see two councils assembled in her rooms for the greatest and most important deliberation that had taken place during this long reign, or indeed during many others." The king, the dauphin, the chancellor, the Duc

de Beauvilliers, the Marquis de Torcy and Mme. de Maintenon were present at the deliberation. Mme. de Maintenon listened in silence to what was said, "but the king forced her to give her opinion after everybody had spoken except herself."

Towards the latter part of the reign James II of England and Queen Mary Beatrice paid annual visits to the palace. They came to Fontainebleau for the first time in 1690, two years after the king's abdication, and continued the visits until the death of James in 1701. Afterwards the queen, accompanied by her son and daughter, continued to make a yearly journey to the palace. The English guests were always received with great ceremony. On October 11, 1690, the occasion of their first arrival, Louis XIV went out shooting in the afternoon, taking the road by which the King and Queen of England were expected to arrive, and accompanied them back to the palace. They entered the Cour du Cheval Blanc at six o'clock, and were received by the dauphin at the foot of the grand staircase. The king offered his hand to Queen Mary Beatrice and led her into the apartments prepared for her. Louis gave the precedence to his royal guests. In the evening there was a reception. The queen played at billiards and at lansquenet. James played at billiards and at ombre with the Cardinal de Furstenberg and Mme. de Croissy. Music was performed during the evening. The following morning the weather was not suitable for hunting and Louis took his visitors to the tennis courts,

where a match was played for their benefit. In the evening there was a reception. All the Court ladies were present at the toilette of the Queen of England and conducted her to chapel, where she knelt to pray between the two kings. The visit, which lasted till the 18th, was spent in receptions, games, hunting and paying calls. James went to see Mlle. de Blois and renewed his acquaintance with Mme. de Montespan. The following five years the same kind of programme was repeated every autumn. In 1696 there was an addition to the royal household in the person of Marie-Adelaide de Savoie, who came to marry the Duc de Bourgogne. She was full of grace and charm, sweet, gentle and gay. Mme de Maintenon kept the young girl under her own wing and often took her to Saint-Cyr. The king went to meet her at Montargis and brought her to Fontainebleau. The evening of the meeting he wrote a long and eulogistic letter concerning the princess to Mme. de Maintenon. "She has the best grace and the prettiest figure I have ever seen ; dressed like a picture and her hair done the same ; eyes very bright and very beautiful, the lashes black and admirable ; complexion very even, white and red, all one could wish ; the finest blond hair that was ever seen and a great mass of it. . . . She speaks little as far as I have heard ; is not embarrassed when looked at, like one who has seen the world. She curtsies badly, with a somewhat Italian air. She has also something of the Italian in her face ; but she pleases. I saw that by

the demeanour of all who were present. As for me, I am entirely satisfied." The marriage took place in December 1697, as soon as Marie-Adelaide reached the age of twelve. On October 31, 1698, she wrote the following childish letter to her grandmother, Madame Royale, the dowager Duchesse de Savoie, during a visit to Fontainebleau.

"The stay at Fontainebleau is very agreeable to me, especially as it is the second place where I had the honour of seeing the king; and I hope, my dear grandmamma, that I shall be happy not only at Fontainebleau but everywhere, being resolved to do all that depends on me to be so."

Marie-Adelaide, who became dauphine in 1711, died the following year. Her son was Louis XV.

In 1698 the marriage took place at Fontainebleau of Mademoiselle, daughter of Elisabeth-Charlotte d'Orléans, to the Duc de Lorraine. The King and Queen of England were present at the betrothal on October 12. Both the bride and her mother were in very low spirits, and did little but shed tears, which scandalized the family into which the former was marrying. "The departure of the Duchesse de Lorraine made us all very sad," wrote the Queen of England from Fontainebleau on the 17th; "she was so afflicted herself that one could hardly look at her without tears. The young bride's bearing in all and towards all charmed every one, and me in particular."

A letter written by the same lady at the palace in 1700 relates an extraordinary incident which might have had serious results.

“I have never had such good health at Fontainebleau as this year. The king, my husband, has also been perfectly well. He has been hunting almost every day, and is growing fat. We have had the most beautiful weather in the world. The king [Louis] as usual lavished upon us a thousand marks of his goodness, and of the most cordial regard, which has given us the utmost pleasure. . . . I experienced when at Fontainebleau the succour of the holy angels, whom you have invoked for me ; for one evening, while I was saying my prayers, I set fire to my night cornettes, which were burned to the very cap, without singeing a single hair.” The fashion of these cornettes was introduced by Mme. de Maintenon, and consisted of three high, narrow shapes of stiffened point or Brussels lace, upright one above the other, and with lappets on both sides. They were unbecoming to many women.

At the beginning of the new century Louis XIV was getting old and feeble. He began to depend more than ever upon Mme. de Maintenon, and usually attended to State affairs in her apartments, whither he summoned his ministers.

Mme. de Maintenon's letters of these years are full of the activities which took place at Fontainebleau, in which neither she nor the king took a large part. The Queen of England, accompanied

by the prince and princess, still made annual visits. The latter was tall and had a fine figure, wrote Mme. de Maintenon, "much more lively than her brother, and quite delighted with Fontainebleau. The Court of England is very brilliant here ; there are more than fifty ladies every day in grand toilette and magnificently dressed ; they meet for the purpose of amusing the young king and princess ; they make parties on horseback round the canal and in the forest ; there were eighty-two carriages counted at the last of these. The princess is much admired at Court ; she is graceful, gay, very lively and witty."

In 1708 France was passing through troubled times, and anxiety and suspense were experienced at the palace, which continued for four succeeding years without diminution. The Court devised every means of forgetting its afflictions ; the courtiers played, hunted and walked night and day. The young princes were growing up, and an effort was made to form a gay set at the palace and endeavour to counteract the increasing gloom of the king's last years.

In 1713 Mme. de Maintenon's letters described some of the diversions.

"The elector [of Bavaria] is here," she wrote. "He resides with M. d'Antin in the Jardin de Diane ; his Highness arrived there on Saturday and began by playing cards with the duchess till midnight, after which he made a party with Mme. de Berry, these two being most calculated for each

other's society, both requiring constant amusement. He was yesterday closeted with the king ; there was a promenade round the canal in the evening. The duchess was on the water, Mme. de Berry in a landau, the young duchess in a coach, the Princesse de Conti and Mlle. de Charolais on horseback, the king alone in his calèche, for he has not yet allowed the place of our dauphine to be occupied. I was not present at this fine sight, but in the forest with four or five ladies, who would not have enjoyed it more than myself.

"I must say a word of Mme. d'Orléans : she was in a coach painted yellow and light blue, with black horses and silver-mounted harness." In 1714 she wrote, "It is true that there is no place where it is so brilliant as at Fontainebleau." The king had been making further improvements, and had fitted up a very beautiful suite of rooms for his own use. A good deal of high play went on this year in an apartment specially arranged by M. d'Antin in the Jardin de Diane. "The elector plays there every day, and all our princesses every night," was Mme. de Maintenon's comment. And again she wrote, "On Wednesday there was some music upon the canal ; the elector was in a boat with the duchess, the king on shore in his calèche, with all the nobility on horseback, and a great number of ladies in small calèches, a little too low, but very pretty, and filled with youth and beauty, which gives these vehicles a more brilliant appearance. . ." The king "hunted seven hours on Thursday, and returned to

the musical party in my room, fresher and gayer than if he had done nothing. He usually attends a stag-hunt twice a week, and on other days he shoots or takes a walk; attends four musical parties at my apartments, or hears some of Molière's best plays read: there are amusements enough; he holds, however, more councils than ever, and he gives a number of audiences, either to courtiers or foreigners."

Sadness, weariness, devoutness were now the king's chief characteristics, and Mme. de Maintenon harmonized with them to the end. She had a small number of intimate friends who formed a "cabale"; the Duchesse de Noailles, her niece, for whom she composed some verses referring to her late arrival at Fontainebleau, the Marquises de Dangeau and d'Heudicourt, the Comtesse de Caylus and others. These ladies were present at musical evenings, receptions and such mild form of entertainments as the king patronized until his death. To the very last he required brilliancy and gaiety in others, although personally he did not help to supply it. He was annoyed if the ladies did not appear at functions *en grande tenue*. In 1715, when he died, Mme. de Maintenon retired to Saint-Cyr. It was left to the caustic Princess Palatine to write a final word about the woman she had heartily disliked. "In the other world," she wrote after Mme. de Maintenon's death, "where all are equal and there is no difference in rank, it will be decided whether she stays with the king or the



Almeida de Almeida
prima dama da corte
segunda dama da corte da Rainha D. Leonor

the rest of the party in my room, fresher and more cheerful than if he had done nothing. He usually comes to the stag-hunt twice a week, and on other days to the shoot or to the games; attends four musical parties a week, and reads some of Molière's comedies. He has had more of the amusements enough; and he has been more cheerful than ever, and he gets a number of audiences, either to courtiers or to the people."

Sadness, weariness, devoutness were now the king's chief characteristics, and Mme. de Maintenon harmonized with them to the end. She had a small number of intimate friends who formed her "coterie"; the Duchesse de Noailles, her niece, to whom she composed some verse referring to her late arrival at Fontainebleau, the Marquises Dangeau and d'Hendin court the Duchesse de Cayenne and others. These ladies were present at musical evenings, receptions and suppers, and formed entertainments as the king did, until his death. Till the very last he required no flattery and gain from others, although persons did not help to surprise him. He was answered to the ladies and to the more exalted persons *en galant* till the day when he died. Mme. de Maintenon continued to write. It was left to the rustic Prince Palatine to write a final word in it at the women she had herself disliked. "In the other world," she wrote after Mme. de Maintenon's death, "where all are equal and there is no difference in rank, it will be decided whether she stays with the king or the



Mme de Montespan.
from a painting by Artache.
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70 yml
ampholab

paralytic Scarron ; but if the king knows then all that was hidden from him in this world there is no doubt he will return her very willingly to Scarron."

The new king, Louis XV, was five and a half years old. Philippe, Duc d'Orléans, was appointed regent. The Princess Palatine, his mother, continued to visit Fontainebleau. After forty-three years' residence in France she still retained her taste for everything German. Daughter of Charles Louis, Elector of the Palatinate, she was born in Heidelberg in 1652. In 1671 she married Monsieur. "I was too old when I came to France," she wrote, "to change my character : the foundations were laid." She could not endure coffee, chocolate or tea ; "a good dish of sauerkraut and smoked sausages is, to my mind, a feast for a king, to which nothing is preferable : cabbage soup with lard suits me much better than all the delicacies they dote on here."

Her character was strong and masculine ; she preferred hunting and shooting to any more feminine occupations, and she followed the stag with great intrepidity. "On Monday our last hunt will take place in the beautiful forest," she wrote on one occasion at Fontainebleau. "I feel that the fine air and exercise do me much good. . . . Last Thursday we hunted a stag that was rather malicious ; but one gentleman slipped round a rock behind him and wounded him in the shoulder, so that not being able to butt with his head he was

no longer dangerous. Behind my carriage there was another in which were three priests, the Archbishop of Lyons, and two abbés. Fearing to be attacked by the stag, two of them jumped out and flung themselves flat on the ground. I am sorry that I did not see the scene, which would have made me laugh, for we old hunters are not so afraid of a stag."

A story was current at the palace that the ghost of François I walked at night in the long gallery, and that the queen's women, who slept there at one time, had seen him dressed in a flower-patterned green dressing-gown. "He has never done me the honour to show himself to me," wrote the Princess Palatine. "Perhaps I am not a favourite with ghosts. I slept for ten years in the same room that the late madame [Henriette] slept, and I never could see anything." And again in 1720 she referred to the subject: "I have often walked about at night in the gallery of the palace of Fontainebleau, where they say the ghost of the late King François I appears; but the good man never did me the honour to appear to me; perhaps he does not think my prayers sufficiently efficacious to call him out of purgatory; and in that he may be right enough."

Elisabeth-Charlotte, Liselotte, as she is familiarly called, died in 1722, her wit sparkling and satiric to the last.

**THE DEMOISELLES DE NESLE AND
MME. DE POMPADOUR
(FOUR SISTERS AND A SIREN)**



CHAPTER XI

THE DEMOISELLES DE NESLE AND MME. DE POMPADOUR

(FOUR SISTERS AND A SIREN)

THE close of Louis XIV's reign was austere, that of Louis XV was prodigal. Le Grand Monarque reduced the number of his Court and travelled with few retainers ; Le Bien-Aimé, on the contrary, was followed by so numerous a train of hangers-on and favourites that the accommodation at the palace was severely tested. The new king grew up under very happy circumstances. He had never been taught to use his mental faculties, all trouble was spared him, and all work done for him. His aim was to have as few cares and as many pleasures as possible. He lived a life of self-indulgence, and neglected affairs of State to attend to his hobbies, which were delving, turning, tapestry, and cooking tasty little dishes. He left business to those who liked it. Of his mistresses Mme. de Pompadour was most assiduous in this respect. She enjoyed having the reins in

her own hands for the sake of showing how well she could drive.

At the age of fifteen Louis was married to Marie Leczinska, daughter of Stanislas, King of Poland. After great deliberation she was chosen from a large number of possible princesses. Seven years older than her boy bridegroom, she had hardly any tastes in common with him. In spite of the fact that she had received a fair education and possessed a good knowledge of several languages, she was narrow-minded, shy, of a retiring disposition, and so strongly inclined towards piety that it eventually became her dominant quality. Her time was spent in prayers, church services, at her toilet-table, in playing cards, and in bringing ten children into the world. The king's numerous infidelities occasioned her great grief at first, but, realizing that it was outside her power to put an end to them, she grew indifferent and finally pacified. On the whole she is not a particularly interesting personage, and her two chief claims to a place in the story of Fontainebleau are, firstly, her marriage there, which was a very festive affair, and, secondly, a severe attack of puritanism, during which she ordered to be veiled some of the beautiful stucco caryatides which originally adorned the bedchamber of Mme. d'Etampes, and now form the upper part of the king's staircase. Michelet described these fine and graceful figures in his *Histoire de France*. "Dreams of the forest," he

called them ; “reveries of a summer night which have been caught on the wing by a quick and delicate hand. They are there, these charming nymphs, made captive, embodied by art ; they can no longer fly away.”

One incident connected with the marriage ceremony tends to show that as a girl Marie Leczinska possessed something winning and gracious in her manner, though she was not beautiful, and soon ceased to be even mildly attractive. She gave away the wedding presents bestowed upon her by her royal bridegroom to her ladies, saying to Louis, “I receive the jewels with pleasure, sire, but overcome as I am with the gift you have already bestowed upon me of your heart, I ask you to allow me to distribute these to those who witness my happiness.” The air of affability with which she carried out her intentions added greatly to the effect of her action and rendered her exceedingly popular.

At the time of her marriage Marie Leczinska was twenty-two years of age. The civil wedding took place by proxy at Strasburg on August 15, 1725. The religious ceremony was performed at Fontainebleau in the Chapelle de la Sainte-Trinité on September 5 following.

A canopy was erected in the middle of the chapel, supported by two pillars, and bounded on the side near the altar by a desk for their Majesties to kneel at, at the foot of which was spread a cloth

of violet velvet covered with golden *fleurs-de-lis* and bearing the arms of France and Navarre. The desk and canopy were draped with violet velvet embroidered with golden *fleurs-de-lis*, and the chairs of state were upholstered in the same fashion. Cardinal de Rohan performed the ceremony. Three benches were reserved for the clergy, three benches for the council. The Keeper of the Seals of France and the Secretaries of State were given prominent seats. The Knights of the Order of the Holy Ghost were placed on either side of the canopy. Under the arches of the chapel "scaffolds in the shape of amphitheatres" were arranged to accommodate the ladies of the Court and strangers. The musicians were in an amphitheatre under an arch, and the sides of the chapel were hung with gold-embroidered tapestry.

The new queen arrived at Fontainebleau at ten o'clock in the morning, having driven from Moret with an escort of gendarmes and light horse, and two companies of musketeers. Louis XV went to her apartment to greet her, and together they proceeded to the chapel.

The heralds headed the procession, and were followed by the masters of the ceremonies; then came the Knights of the Order of the Holy Ghost marching two by two, their chief officers in front. The king followed, accompanied by Ushers of the Bedchamber, and nobles, princes, and officers of the household. He was attired in a coat of gold

brocade, trimmed with gold embroidery and diamonds, with a mantle of gold Spanish point, and a hat adorned with a large diamond.

The queen marched next, with the Ducs d'Orléans and de Bourbon, pages of honour and others. She was attired in a royal mantle of violet velvet, embroidered with golden *fleurs-de-lis* and lined with ermine. The front of her skirt was loaded with diamonds, and the sleeves of her gown were fastened with diamond clasps. She wore a crown of diamonds. Her train, which was nine ells in length, was borne by Court ladies, and a number of beautifully dressed women closed the procession. Trumpets, fifes and tabors sounded during the march, and the way was lined with troops. The ceremony was long and impressive. When it was over and the king and queen had signed the register, the heralds distributed a number of special medals which had been struck for the occasion. The king and queen were represented on both sides, the reverse showing them hand-in-hand, being united by the Cardinal de Rohan, with the inscription "Nuptialia. Font. Bell. 1725."

After the ceremony the procession returned to the palace. The queen divested herself of her ceremonial robes and crown, and dined with the king and several of her ladies. The king's gift was presented to her in a crimson velvet jewel case, but she gave the gems away.

In the evening a comedy was played and supper was served later in the queen's apartments. After the meal the whole Court proceeded through the galleries to the parterre, where illuminations and fireworks were arranged, the royal family being seated under a canopy specially erected for the occasion.

On September 6 the king and queen went together to hear Mass. In the afternoon they took the air in the park, the king riding along the grand canal, whilst the queen drove. Music was performed on the water. In the evening there was a concert in the queen's apartments. The festivities continued for several days, and at first everything augured well for the newly wedded couple, but their mutual affection was not of long duration.

Louis was surrounded by well-meaning but frivolous courtiers and friends, who soon succeeded in persuading him that amusement was to be found in quite other directions than a peaceful and domestic existence. They led him into intemperance, into a love of high play and into gallantries, which soon exceeded the madcap pranks they had intended the weak-minded king to indulge in. His first mistresses of importance were a succession of sisters, the famous Demoiselles de Nesle. The eldest of these, the charming and accomplished Comtesse de Mailly, continued to keep the king's affection for three years, without causing much

scandal or disgrace. She was supplanted by Pauline, her younger sister, who became the Marquise de Vintimille, and died suddenly having given birth to a son, who received the nickname "demi-Louis" because of his likeness to the king. This affair had been merely an intermission in the reign of Mme. de Mailly which was soon to be resumed, but which lasted only until 1742, when her sister, the Duchesse de Lauraguais, usurped her position for a short time. It was left, however, to the widowed Marquise de la Tournelle to attract the then wandering affections of the king and hold them with great material advantage to herself. She was far more self-seeking than any of her sisters, and demanded an official position at Court and the title of Duchess. She was made *dame du palais* to the queen, and received the Duchy of Châteauroux, to which an income of eighty thousand livres was attached. On the other hand, poor Mme. de Mailly, who was affectionate and unselfish, never asked for money. Richelieu said the king spent less upon her than a financier spends upon an opera-dancer. Later in his reign no king lavished more on his favourites than Louis XV. The history of the successive rise and fall of these four fair sisters can be read in the Memoirs of the Duc de Luynes. His account of the yearly visits of the Court to Fontainebleau covers the various stages of their careers, and throws, moreover, instructive sidelights on the ever-increasing luxury

and licentiousness of the king's habits. The Court was at Fontainebleau in October 1736, the first year described in the Memoirs. In 1737 we find the king hunting in company with the queen, keeping the day of Saint-Hubert,¹ which was November 4, accompanied by some twenty-four or twenty-five of his friends, and holding private supper-parties, which was one of the greatest features of his reign. At this time only men were invited to the *cabinet soupers*, but the following year women were admitted, and the suppers gradually became more frequent. On fast-days the favourites were not allowed to be present. The king hunted four times a week. The evening amusements varied. On Tuesdays a tragedy was played, on Thursdays a French comedy, on Saturdays Italian comedy; Mondays and Wednesdays there was music, on Fridays and Sundays cards. The comedy or concert usually began at six o'clock. When the king supped in his apartments, which happened two or three times a week, the queen did not wear full dress, but listened to the concert from an inner chamber. The play at this time was usually performed in one of her rooms, and she was *en grande tenue*. In 1738 seventy-seven ladies, including the maids of honour

¹ A ceremony held every year from the reign of Henri IV onwards to that of Napoleon III, when masses were said for the safety and preservation from danger of all dogs of whatsoever breed.

to the princesses, were assembled at Fontainebleau. The *petits soupers* began to be very gay. Mme. de Mailly, still *dame du palais*, was there frequently, as well as Mademoiselle,¹ Mme. d'Antin, Mlle. de Clermont, Mme. de Saint-Germain, Mme. la Princesse de Conti, Mme. de Boufflers, Mmes. de Fleury, d'Egmont, de Pizieux, de Chalais, Mme. la Maréchale d'Estrées and many others.

In the following year Mme. de Vintimille accompanied the Court to Fontainebleau for the first time. A chill note of dread sounded in the favourite's heart ; she feared to find a rival in her own sister. So great was her anxiety that she was unable to disguise it. It was fast-day and the king was supping with courtiers. Mademoiselle had arranged a little supper in her rooms for the ladies. Suddenly Mme. de Mailly, overcome by uneasiness, rose from table. Every one thought she had been taken ill, and Mme. de Vintimille made a movement as though to follow her. Mademoiselle, however, advised her to restrain her curiosity. In a quarter of an hour Mme. de Mailly returned by way of the Jardin de Diane. With sinking at her heart she went to see which apartments had been set aside for the occupation of Mme. de Vintimille. After supper cards were produced, and presently the king came in. For an hour he played at *cavagnole*, a game which Voltaire detested. Seated between their Majesties

¹ Louise Anne de Bourbon.

at the *cavagnole* table, he said, ennui stalks on apace. Mme. de Mailly had the privilege of sitting next to Louis XV that evening. On October 8 Mme. de Vintimille was presented to the queen. Mademoiselle was in the room, as well as Mme. de Mailly, Mme. de Mazarin, Mme. de Flavacourt and Mme. de la Tournelle. The queen was very gracious to these ladies, but before long she had reason to show a certain amount of coolness.

The *cabinet soupers* increased in frequency. Hunting was fast and furious. Mesdames de Mailly and de Vintimille sometimes accompanied the king in his gondola, whilst the queen followed in her carriage.

Building alterations were now in progress. The beautiful Galerie d'Ulysse was demolished by the king's orders, and in its place a plain and ugly wing was erected. This contains the theatre built under Napoleon III after the destruction of Mme. de Pompadour's theatre by fire in 1856. Only five performances took place in it. The rooms reserved for the President are also in this wing of the palace.

The last year in which Mme. de Vintimille was at Fontainebleau was 1740. In September 1741 she died, believing herself to have been poisoned. The Court remained at Versailles. In the autumn of 1742 the usual visit to Fontainebleau took place. Mme. de Mailly was in favour again,

and was present at most of the meals of which the king partook in his own rooms. Louis hunted four days a week, following stag three times and wild-boar once. When there was no hunting he dined in his apartments with his mistress and M. de Meuse. No one else was admitted. Supper on these days was *au grand couvert*. On the alternate days he supped in his apartments with his mistress and M. de Meuse, and though no other women were invited, two or three men were sometimes present. After supper there were games of quadrille, reversi or cavagnole. It is significant to notice that this year Mme. de Mailly was admitted to the *petits soupers* on fast-days. The "lean brunette" with the beautiful sparkling brown eyes was now at the end of her triumphs. In 1743 Mme. de Lauraguais and Mme. de la Tournelle had ousted her from her position. The former was only temporarily honoured by the king's notice, the latter grew more and more arrogant as his passion for her increased. She was apportioned a fine apartment, tastefully though not magnificently furnished. It was entered from the Cour Ovale and communicated direct with the king's *cabinets*. The windows overlooked the Jardin de Diane. This garden was also visible from the windows of the Galerie des Réformés and at certain times in the evening the guards were ordered to turn aside all those who wished to traverse the gallery, and they were forced to use

the uncovered terrace-way instead. Mme. de Lauraguais and Mme. de la Tournelle supped with the king, and the only men admitted were M. d'Anville, M. d'Estissac, M. de Meuse and M. de Villeroy. Mme. d'Antin remained friendly with the new favourites, and Mlle. de la Roche-sur-Yon also showed no ill-will, but Mme. de Boufflers absented herself from the suppers and the hunt because she disliked Mme. de Lauraguais, and Mademoiselle, who had an affection for Mme. de Mailly and could not bear Mme. de la Tournelle, excused herself on a plea of melancholy and ill-health. Meanwhile Mme. de la Tournelle noticed nothing of such exhibitions of feeling and proceeded to exert her power and to feather her nest. One day it occurred to her to complain that the chapel was wanting in comfort, the seats were bare boards, and the stools only covered with leather. The following day all this was changed, benches and stools were upholstered in crimson velvet. Then she demanded an establishment. She was provided with the best chef and kitchen staff available, with an equerry, six coach-horses and a berlin specially built for her. In October she received the title of Duchesse de Châteauroux, and was formally presented to the queen under her new name by Mme. de Lauraguais. Six other ladies were present, and the queen approached the favourite and said graciously, "Madame, I compliment you on the new honour accorded you by the king." This lady's career

was to be no more fortunate than that of her sisters.

The following year Louis, in a sudden accession of righteousness, which in him was only occasioned by a dread of death, dismissed her summarily from his presence. It was true he repented of his haste and received her into favour again, but it was too late. By the end of the year she lay dead of some mysterious malady, which was speedy enough in its effects to raise the usual outcry of foul play. To Mme. de Mailly alone it was given to expiate her misdoing by long years of devotion and good works. It was said of her that once in after life she was recognized as she came out of a church by two idle courtiers, who used a coarse epithet concerning her, which she overheard. Instead of showing anger at their impertinence, she turned to them and said meekly, "Sirs, since you recognize me, do me the favour to offer up a prayer for my soul."

The year that witnessed the death of Mme. de Châteauroux was the first in which the famous Pompadour appeared at Court. Hitherto the king had interested himself only in ladies of noble birth, now he was to turn to less exalted dames. Born in December 1721, Jeanne-Antoinette Poisson was educated at the expense, not of Jean Poisson, her nominal father, but of a wealthy financier, M. de Lenormand de Tourneheim, her putative parent. At eighteen years of age she bid fair to become one of the most highly accomplished women of

her day. She could dance, act, sing and draw. Her playing of the harpsichord was so exquisite that it moved Mme. de Mailly to show a transport of delight and occasioned her to mention the fair performer's name for the first time at Court, where she was soon to play an important part. She grew up under the best teachers. Jelyotte taught her to sing; Guibaudet to dance; Crébillon and Lanoue trained her in declamation. Président Henault thought her one of the most charming women he had ever seen. He spoke highly of her knowledge of music, considered that she sang *chansons* with great gaiety and good taste, and greatly admired her performance of comedy. But these were not by any means her only gifts. She possessed a perfect seat on horseback, showed exquisite taste in dress, and used her pretty wit with great effect. Nor was her personal appearance any the less bewildering and intoxicating. She was, wrote Charles Georges Leroy, "rather above the middle height, slender, supple and graceful. Her face suited her figure, it was a perfect oval. Her hair was luxuriant, of a light chestnut shade rather than fair, and the eyebrows which shaded her magnificent eyes were of the same tinge. She had a perfectly formed nose, a charming mouth, lovely teeth and a ravishing smile, while the most exquisite skin one could wish to behold added to the beauty of her appearance. Her eyes had a singular charm, which

perhaps arose from their being of indistinguishable colour; they had not the dazzling keenness of black eyes, nor the tender languor of blue eyes, nor yet the piercing vision of grey. In short, their undecided colour rendered them fascinating and expressed successively all the impressions of a very mobile nature.”¹

This was the woman, then, who was to rule France, not only as the king's mistress, but as his Regent and Prime Minister. Her mother had early instilled into the mind of the little Antoinette some such ambition as this. In the spring of 1741 Mlle. Poisson was married to M. Lenormand d'Étioles, nephew of her benefactor, a rich young man, who was undersized, plain and red-haired, but who provided her with several establishments, one of the most important being the Château d'Étioles near the forest of Sénart, where Louis XV frequently hunted. At Étioles, too, her husband's uncle built a little theatre, in which his clever niece was able to develop and show off her remarkable histrionic powers. Had Mme. d'Étioles at this time had no higher aims in view she might have gone upon the stage. Instead of which she occupied herself by driving a phaeton and a pair of magnificent brown horses up and down the forest roads, appearing most often whenever there was a report that the king was following his favourite diversion. On the other hand, it may have been

¹ C. G. Leroy, *Louis XV et Mme. de Pompadour*.

chance that made him frequently cross the phaeton's path and observe therein a very striking-looking lady, dressed in pale blue or pale pink, handling whip and reins with marvellous grace, skill and fearlessness. No one as susceptible to feminine charms as the king could fail to notice such a smart turn-out. Mme. de Châteauroux, still reigning mistress at this time, felt hurt and chagrined by his obvious interest. Her untimely death spared her any further jealousy. It occurred just when the name of "la petite d'Étioles" was bandied to and fro at Court. Louis made the acquaintance of the little-known beauty at a masked ball given at the Hôtel de Ville on the occasion of the marriage of the dauphin to the Infanta Marie-Thérèse at the end of February 1745, two months after the death of Mme. de Châteauroux. Antoinette was dressed as Diana—was ever *rôle* so popular?—with the inevitable bow and quiver, and her hair gathered up in ringlets and glittering with precious stones. Before the close of the year she had been made Marquise de Pompadour and was installed in apartments at Versailles and at Fontainebleau, where she was given the very rooms until then occupied by Mme. de Châteauroux. She was immediately admitted to the *cabinets soupers*, in company with Mme. de Modène, Mlle. de Sens, Mme. la Maréchale de Duras, Mme. de Sassenage and Mme. d'Estrades, who was her staunch friend. Mme. de

Pompadour on the whole lived quietly during this first visit to Fontainebleau. Sometimes she supped with the king, sometimes she gave charming little suppers in her own apartments. She was presented to the queen, who received her graciously whenever she chose to pay her devoirs. It was said that she greatly respected Marie Leczinska, that she was exceedingly polite, bore herself well in every way and was gay and gentle in character. She used her keen wits and ever-ready observation in studying Court ways and learning the ins and outs of Court intrigue so that she might be well equipped in her struggle for supremacy. She did her best to please everybody, and tried to avoid making enemies. She was especially anxious not to fall foul of the queen's piety, and attended the meetings and sermons which Marie Leczinska held in her own apartments and to which she invited the ladies at Court. Special admission tickets were sent out on these occasions. Mme. de Pompadour received a ticket one day when she was ill. She had been bled and could not leave her room. That evening the king gave a supper, at which she was unable to be present. Mmes. de Sassenage, d'Estrades and de Bellefonds were there as well as several men. During the meal Louis left the table and went to Mme. de Pompadour's apartments to see how she was getting on. After remaining with her a few minutes he returned to the supper-table and sent M. de Meuse, and afterwards M. de Soubise, to

keep her company in order that she might not feel dull.

When the king hunted he drove Mme. de Pompadour, Mmes. de Sassenage and d'Estrades in his carriage. At the meet the favourite mounted on horseback. The ordinary day at Fontainebleau was described by the Duc de Luynes. "After the king was risen and dressed," he wrote, "he went down to Mme. de Pompadour's apartments. He remained there until he went to Mass. On returning from Mass he went again and had soup and a cutlet, for his Majesty does not dine ; he stayed there till five or six, his hour of work. On council days he goes down before and after the council. It appears that everybody finds Mme. de Pompadour exceedingly polite, not only is she not *méchante*, and says evil of no one, but she does not even allow any one to gossip in her rooms. She is gay and speaks freely. She has no false pride and frequently mentions her relatives, even in the presence of the king. Perhaps she even repeats herself too much on this subject."

Everything that could be done to please the favourite was done. She loved festivities of all kinds, and if a *fête* was arranged upon the same day as a comedy the king ordered the comedy to be postponed till the following evening in order that Mme. de Pompadour might enjoy both. He often accompanied her to the theatre, where they sat together in a box which was railed off. They could

look down from it into the queen's box. A staircase led from the favourite's apartments to those of the king, and another ascended into this private box.

In spite of her endeavours to be friendly with everybody many lampoons, called *Poissonades*, were freely circulated about her, but she was popular with all who knew her personally. Voltaire was her devoted admirer. He tried to win her good graces from the first. No sooner was she openly proclaimed Louis's mistress than, according to Marmontel's account, "he made haste to pay court to her. He easily succeeded in pleasing her ; and while he celebrated the victories of the king he at the same time flattered his mistress by writing pretty verses for her. He doubted not that by such means he would obtain the favour of being admitted to the little cabinet suppers ; and I am convinced that such would have been her wish." One of the verses in question was

"Quand Louis, ce héros charmant,
Dont tout Paris fait son idole,
Gagne quelque combat brillant,
On en doit faire compliment
À la divine d'Étiolle."

Voltaire, however, was not a favourite with the king, and did not succeed in becoming popular at Fontainebleau.

He was there in 1745 gathering together "all the anecdotes about the king's campaigns." In

mud : that is the daily bread. The weekly bread is Monday, concert ; Tuesday, tragedy ; Wednesday, concert ; Thursday, French comedy ; Friday, Benediction ; Saturday, Italian comedy ; Sunday, High Mass. . . . I should be terribly bored at Court if there were not a corner window in one of the galleries where I stand hour after hour, opera-glass in hand, and God knows, I take great pleasure in watching those who come and go. Ah ! what masks they wear ! If you could only see what an edifying air the gentlemen of your cloth assume, and the importance of the courtiers ! And how the others alternate between fear and hope ! Besides, many of the expressions worn are obviously quite false to the observant eye.

“ It is wonderful. The most genuine faces are those of the Swiss. They are the only real philosophers at Court. . . . I, too, wear a Swiss air, and yesterday I was watching, to my infinite satisfaction, Voltaire, who was bobbing up and down like a cork in the waves of more stolid folk. Presently he perceived me. ‘ Ah, good-day, my dear Piron. What are you doing at Court ? I have been here for three weeks ; they played my *Mariamne* the other day ; they will play *Zaïre*. When will they play *Gustave* ? How are you ? Ah, duke, just one word ; I have been looking for you.’ All that uttered in one breath, whilst I remained rooted there to recover as best I might.”

In 1749 Voltaire wrote to the Duchesse du Maine, with whom he was on very good terms: "I am forced to be at Fontainebleau in order to try to draw the Court out of its miseries," and he fled for safety to her at Sceaux after an indiscretion committed at the palace. The Marquise du Châtelet was playing lansquenet in the queen's *salon*, and lost eighty-four thousand francs. Dissatisfied with the conditions which prevailed at the gaming-table, Voltaire, who was watching the proceedings from behind her chair, leant over her and whispered in English, "You are playing with cheats." Some of the courtiers understood his remark and complained to the king. Voltaire found it advisable to disappear from the scene for a time.

Meanwhile Mme. de Pompadour was doing everything she could to keep the king from boredom. She realized that it was not easy to evolve new amusements for one who was surfeited with pleasure. She conceived the brilliant idea of constructing a theatre and playing in it herself. The plan was carried into speedy execution. On January 17, 1747, the theatre of the private apartments was opened at Versailles, the first play represented being Molière's *Tartuffe*. Before two years had passed the theatre was too small to accommodate all those who were invited to the performances, and it was necessary to build another. Again the favourite's ingenuity stood her in good stead. She

had a new one constructed at Fontainebleau in the vestibule of the grand staircase. This playhouse was a masterpiece of mechanism, and could be set up in twenty-four hours and dismantled in fourteen. It was reported that the building cost two million francs. This rumour reached the ears of the prodigal marquise, who was very indignant at any adverse criticism of her actions. She exclaimed indignantly, "What is it that people are saying about the new theatre which the king has built at the palace costing two millions? I should like them to know that it only cost twenty thousand crowns, and surely the king can well afford to spend that sum on amusement." She either deceived herself or wished intentionally to deceive others. The king himself admitted that the theatre had cost a far larger sum than the one she mentioned. The enterprise was, however, very successful. The house was opened for the first time on November 27, 1748. It accommodated forty musicians and a larger number of spectators. The decorations were exquisite, the upholstery blue and silver. The piece played on the night of inauguration was *Les Surprises de l'Amour*, which included two ballets. Mme. de Pompadour took the parts of Venus and of Urania, and her singing left nothing to be desired. Every one was charmed, except the king, who with his usual air of boredom remarked in the middle of the performance, loudly enough for every one to hear, that he much preferred comedy.

The king's mistress was frequently at her wits' end to devise means of keeping Louis interested. She had seductive little suppers arranged by Mouthier, the prince of cooks, who boasted of the culinary skill of a long line of ancestors. She stimulated his taste in art, letters, porcelain, tapestry and furniture. She collected beautiful works of every kind, and patronized the manufacture of Gobelin tapestry and Sévres china. She bore the greater burden of State business, and when all else failed and Louis showed signs of renewed ennui, when he was bored by the iniquitous Parc aux Cerfs, she whirled him and his train of followers from place to place, from Versailles to Choisy, from Marly to Compiègne, from Compiègne to Fontainebleau and back to Versailles. The Court's erratic movements were freely commented upon. Walpole wrote to Conway on June 23, 1752 : " The king's expenses are incredible. Mme. de Pompadour is continually busied in finding out new journeys and diversions to keep him from falling into the hands of the clergy. The last party of pleasure she made for him was a stag-hunting ; the stag was a man in skin and horns, worried by twelve men dressed like bloodhounds ! I have read of Basilowitz, a Czar of Muscovy, who improved on such a hunt, and had a man in a bearskin worried by real dogs, a more kingly entertainment ! "

Indeed Mme. de Pompadour wore herself out mind and body in the restless haste and excitement of Court life. Her power was growing enormous,

and was reflected by those whom she favoured. Marmontel, who called her the best creature in the world, depicted the woman "at whose toilet the first grandees in the kingdom, and even the princes of the blood paid their court." "Madame de Pompadour," he wrote in his *Memoirs*, "often inquired how I came on with my new play; when it was finished she wished to read it, and made some pretty just objections to particular passages; but, on the whole, she was pleased with it. . . . While the manuscript of my play was still in the hands of Mme. de Pompadour, I appeared one Sunday at her toilet, in that hall which was crowded with courtiers, newly come from the king's levee. She was encircled by them; and whether there were any whom she disliked to see, or whether she was tired of having so many people about her, she said, immediately on seeing me, 'I have something to say to you,' then leaving her toilet, she went into her closet, whither I followed." Mme. de Pompadour wished to return the manuscript to its author. When Marmontel reappeared in the crowd every eye was turned upon him, "slight, little salutations, sweet smiles of friendship were addressed to me from all sides; and, before leaving the hall, I was invited to dinner for at least the whole week. What do I say? A nobleman, a man with a ribbon at his breast, whom I had sometimes dined with at M. de la Popliniere's (the M.D.S. happening to stand by

my side), took hold of my hand, and whispered, 'Won't you speak to your old friends?' Amazed at his meanness, I bowed, and said to myself, 'Ah ! what a thing, then, is favour, since its very shadow confers such singular importance!'

Besides Voltaire and Marmontel, Mme. de Pompadour patronized a number of men of letters. Diderot and d'Alembert, Crébillon, Montesquieu, Louis de Boissy, Duclos, and the Abbé de Bernis were amongst her protégés. She would gladly have furthered the interests of Rousseau, but he would have none of her favours. In *La Nouvelle Héloïse* a phrase occurred which was well calculated to give offence to the king's mistress. Malesherbes pointed this out to the author, who refused to make any change. Seeing that Rousseau's obstinacy was likely to injure him in the sight of Mme. de Pompadour, Malesherbes removed the offensive passage in the copy sent her. Rousseau wrote of this incident in his Confessions—

"I have always considered Malesherbes as a man of unassailable uprightness . . . but since his weakness is as great as his honour he sometimes injures those in whom he takes an interest by his efforts to protect them. He not only ordered more than a hundred pages of the Paris edition to be cut out, but he mutilated the copy of the good edition which he sent to Mme. de Pompadour. . . . I have said somewhere in this work that a coal-heaver's wife is more worthy

of respect than the mistress of a prince. This phrase had occurred to me in the fervour of composition, and I swear that no personal allusion was intended. On reading the work over again I saw that others would certainly see one."

Mme. de Pompadour did not care for *La Nouvelle Héloïse*, but grew very enthusiastic over *Le Devin du Village*, which was performed for the first time at Fontainebleau in 1752. After the performance, which was an unqualified success, was over, Mme. de Pompadour wished to present the author to the king. This introduction, however, did not take place owing to Rousseau's extraordinary self-consciousness. The whole story appears in the Confessions, where it is so inimitably told that to refrain from extracting it in full would be to spoil it in the telling.

"When everything was ready and the day fixed for the performance," he wrote, "it was proposed to me that I should take a journey to Fontainebleau, to be present at the last rehearsal, at any rate. I went with Mademoiselle Fel, Grimm, and, I think, the Abbé Raynal, in one of the royal carriages. The rehearsal was tolerable ; I was better satisfied with it than I had expected to be. The orchestra was a powerful one, consisting of those of the opera and the royal band. Jelyotte played Colin ; Mademoiselle Fel, Colette ; Cuvitier, the Devin (soothsayer). The choruses were from the opera. I said little. Jelyotte had arranged every-

thing, and I did not desire to have any control over his arrangements ; but, in spite of my Roman air, I was as bashful as a school-boy amongst all these people.”

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The performance itself took place the following day. Rousseau describes it as one of the critical moments of his life. “On that day,” he continued, “I was dressed in my usual careless style, with a beard of some days’ growth and a badly combed wig. Considering this want of good manners as a proof of courage, I entered the hall where the king, the queen, the royal family and the whole Court were presently to arrive. I proceeded to take my seat in the box to which M. de Cury conducted me ; it was his own—a large stage-box, opposite a smaller and higher one, where the king sat with Mme. de Pompadour. Surrounded by ladies, and the only man in front of the box, I had no doubt that I had been put there on purpose to be seen. When the theatre was lighted up, and I found myself, dressed in the manner I was, in the midst of people all most elegantly attired, I began to feel ill at ease. I asked myself whether I was in my right place, and whether I was suitably dressed. After a few moments of uneasiness I answered ‘Yes,’ with a boldness which perhaps was due rather to the impossibility of drawing back than to the force of my arguments. I said to myself, ‘I am in my place, since I am going to see my own piece performed ; because I have been invited ;

because I composed it solely for that purpose ; because, after all, no one has more right than myself to enjoy the fruit of my labour and talents. I am dressed as usual, neither better nor worse. If I again begin to yield to public opinion in any single thing I shall soon become its slave in everything. To be consistent I must not be ashamed, wherever I may be, to be dressed in accordance with the condition of life which I have chosen for myself. My outward appearance is simple and careless, but not dirty or slovenly. A beard in itself is not so, since it is bestowed upon us by Nature, and according to times and fashions is sometimes even an ornament. People will consider me ridiculous, impertinent. Well, what does it matter to me ? I must learn how to put up with ridicule and censure, provided they are not deserved.' After this little soliloquy I felt so encouraged that I should have behaved with intrepidity, if it had been necessary." Then seeing that the interest in him arose in civility and amiability rather than vulgar curiosity, Rousseau concluded, "I was armed against their raillery ; but their kindly attitude, which I had not expected, so completely overcame me that I trembled like a child when the performance began."

The piece was badly acted, according to its author, but the singing was good, and the music well executed. A murmur of surprise and applause was heard. Excitement grew and grew,

as Montesquieu said, "the very effect increased the effect." No clapping took place in the king's presence, but women, who seemed at that moment "as beautiful as angels" to Rousseau, whispered "Charming ! Delightful ! Every note speaks to the heart !" The piece was a great success, not only the author, but many others being moved to tears. "If none but men had been present," wrote the susceptible Rousseau, "I am convinced that I should not have been consumed, as I was, by the incessant desire of catching with my lips the delightful tears which I caused to flow. I have seen pieces excite more lively transports of admiration, but never so complete, so delightful, and so moving an intoxication, which completely overcame the audience, especially at a first performance before the Court."

That evening Rousseau was commanded to appear before the king at the palace early the next morning. It was supposed that his reward was to be a pension. The time came, but the highly-strung author dared not face the ordeal. He had fled from Fontainebleau, sacrificing pension, honour, popularity, everything, in a fit of nervous timidity, but the king did not forget the impression the play had made upon him. "All day long," wrote Jelyotte to Rousseau, "his Majesty is continually singing, with the most execrable voice in his kingdom, and utterly out of tune, 'J'ai perdu mon serviteur, j'ai perdu tout mon bonheur.'"

A succession of plays was performed at

Fontainebleau in 1753 and 1754: *Le Mercure Galant*, *Les Fées*, *Amasis*, *Daphnis and Eglé*, *Atys*, *Pygmalion*, of which the music was by Rameau, *Alceste*, composed by Lulli, and many others. In the latter year Fontainebleau was described as "more brilliant than ever, the spectacles are superb." Mme. de Pompadour was the centre and pivot of all the gaiety, her charm was never so strong, her sceptre never so potent. She endeavoured to rule the country and control its government. She negotiated treaties, she appointed and dismissed ministers, she chose ambassadors, she had, in short, a final word in every affair of importance. She had numerous establishments and apartments in all the palaces. Her retinue was enormous, her expenditure reached fabulous sums. She was, for the time being at least, a world-force. From Choisy to Bellevue, from Crécy-en-Brie to Ménars, from Fontainebleau to Versailles she passed like a meteor, but nowhere was she more her real self, the siren, the sultana, than in her simple, secluded, one-storied hotel situated on the road to Bourron, just beyond the gardens of Fontainebleau and connected with the palace by a subterranean tunnel. The house was built in 1749. It was very simply furnished, it had but small suites of rooms, it accommodated only Mme. de Pompadour and her friend, Mme. d'Estrades. In the *salon* there was room for six card-tables, where the hostess, the king and their guests played for high stakes. There was a courtyard, a garden, a little dairy and a fowl-run, but in

appearance the place, which only cost two hundred thousand francs, was a white, box-like cottage with no outward adornment except a representation of the four seasons moulded beneath its gables. Yet in all its simplicity it represented in a typical manner one of the phases of an extraordinary factor in French history, the power and fascination of a woman, of a mistress, over the king of France, and through him over the whole nation.

In 1756 Mme. de Pompadour's glory was waning. Voltaire wrote that she had turned *dévot*e, and had chosen a Jesuit for her confessor. Walpole was more explicit. He wrote to Sir Horace Mann on February 23 of that year—

“You will have heard before you receive this that the King of France and Mme. de Pompadour are gone into devotion. Some say that d'Argenson, finding how much her inclinations for peace with us fell in with the monarch's humanity (and which indeed is the only rational account one can give of their inactivity), employed the Cardinal de la Rochefoucauld and the confessor to threaten the most Christian king with an earthquake if he did not communicate at Easter; and that his Majesty accordingly made over his mistress to his wife, by appointing the former *dame du palais*; others who refine more pretend that Mme. Pompadour, perceiving how much the king's disposition veered to devotion, artfully took the turn of humouring it, desired to be only his soul's concubine, and actually sent to ask pardon of her husband, and to offer to

return to him, from which he begged to be excused—the point in dispute is whether she has or has not left off rouge. In our present hostile state we cannot arrive at any certainty on this important question, though our fate seems to depend on it!”

By the time she died in 1764, at the age of forty-two, the king had grown weary of her. She had shared his life for nearly twenty years. The splendour, the extravagance, the brilliancy and ascendancy of her reign seem to die out all at once. She is transformed by a touch into a tired, worn-out old woman, aged in experience if not in years, who was glad to lay down the burden and toil of the day and be at rest. The attitude of boredom and indifference indulged in by Louis XV, true or assumed, may be deduced from the traditional story of her funeral, which was very simply conducted. It was raining, and as the king gazed idly from the palace window at the passing cortège, he glanced at the carriage containing the mortal remains of the woman he had loved, and remarked, “The poor marquise has a very wet day for her journey.”

Sainte-Beuve regarded Mme. de Pompadour as the last king's mistress worthy of the name. “After her,” he wrote, “it would be impossible to descend and enter with decency into the history of the Du Barry.” The story of Fontainebleau takes no heed of any such distinction. Mme. du Barry succeeded Mme. de Pompadour at the palace, and it is impossible to ignore her.

MME. DU BARRY AND MARIE-
ANTOINETTE

(THE SHAME AND THE PRIDE OF
THE PALACE)



CHAPTER XII

MME. DU BARRY AND MARIE-ANTOINETTE

(THE SHAME AND THE PRIDE OF THE PALACE)

MME. DE POMPADOUR had striven ceaselessly to amuse her royal lover, and ended by wearing herself out in the attempt. Her successor, Mme. du Barry, did nothing of the kind ; she was built in an entirely different mould. Born in the gutter, a courtesan from the crown of her head to the sole of her foot, she was content to please without effort, to be caressed and spoilt by those who liked her, to be suffered to live and love by those who wished her ill. She had no great ambition, except, cat-like, for her own comfort, and she had no desire to rule except when any one tried to thwart her. Her life would have been comparatively uneventful, save for three struggles which kept it from stagnation. The first was occasioned by the difficulties attendant on her presentation at Court, the second by the enmity of the Duc de Choiseul, who highly disapproved of her appointment as *maîtresse en titre* ; and the third, and perhaps most interesting, although least

acute, took place between herself and Marie-Antoinette, whom she was intensely desirous of propitiating, and who to the bitter end treated her with a coldness and disdain it was impossible to overcome.

The natural daughter of a Vaucouleurs sempstress, Jeanne Bécu was born on August 19, 1743. At the age of seven she was sent to a convent, and does not again emerge into history until 1759. Her education does not appear to have served to much purpose, either intellectually or morally. When next heard of Jeanne was a companion to a widow lady called La Garde, but after about a year of this service was apprenticed to a milliner. Her remarkable beauty was no doubt responsible for irregularities in her life. The details are not necessary to the story of Fontainebleau, except that in the course of her adventures she encountered a certain Jean du Barry, who had an extraordinary influence upon her future. From the notorious gaming-house in which they had met in 1763 he "invited her to take charge of his home and do the honours of it," as he himself expressed it. From thenceforward she lived in luxury, drove in her own coach, and was gorgeously dressed and adorned with beautiful gems. She made the acquaintance of several swells about town, among them the Duc de Richelieu, the Duc de Duras, of whom Walpole wrote, "the liveliest man I have seen ; he is shorter and plumper

than Lord Halifax, but very like him in the face" ; the Prince de Ligne, who admired her immensely and described her in a most eulogistic manner as ravishingly beautiful, and the Duc de Nivernais, the "decent friend" of Mme. de Rochefort, of whom Mme. de Geoffrin said he was "manqué par tout ; guerrier manqué, ambassadeur manqué, homme d'affaires manqué et auteur manqué," to which Walpole added the saving clause, "he is not homme de naissance manqué."

But higher honours than these were to be hers. She was presently introduced under the new and more aristocratic name of Mlle. de Vaubernier to the king himself, and his subjugation was immediate and complete. Her high spirits and animal vitality, her inimitable good-humour and natural behaviour, charmed the king's jaded tastes. He immediately expressed the desire that she should follow the Court to Compiègne and then to Fontainebleau. It was July of 1768, and the queen had been dead three weeks. But before it was possible to establish an intrigue with the new favourite a husband and a title had to be found for her. Jean du Barry was already married and therefore out of the question, but he brought forward a bachelor brother, and after elaborate formalities the little street-girl, Jeanne Bécu, now described as the Demoiselle Jeanne Gomard de Vaubernier, became the wife of Messire Guillaume, Comte du Barry, her family motto being thenceforward "Boutez-en-

avant." No sooner was the ceremony over than the newly-made bride was at liberty to follow the king. The Court was at Fontainebleau as usual in October, and a suite of apartments in the palace was set aside for her occupation.

Mercy-Argenteau, Austrian Ambassador at the French Court from 1766 to 1790, and presently to become the appointed guardian of Marie-Antoinette, wrote to Kaunitz in a letter dated from Fontainebleau on November 1, 1768: "The Sieur du Barry made some researches into his genealogical tree, and found that he was descended from the ancient Irish family of Barrymore. He took their arms and displayed them on Mme. du Barry's equipages and on a very handsome sedan chair which she uses in the interior of the palace. She has apartments in the Cour de la Fontaine, near the rooms formerly occupied by Mme. de Pompadour. She has a number of servants and brilliant liveries, and she is to be seen on *fête* days and Sundays at the king's Mass in one of the chapels on the *rez-de-chaussée*, which is reserved for her."

This was but the first step in her success, however! In the following January, Walpole wrote, "Mme. du Barry, the French meteor, does not seem to be a fixed star." A storm of abuse had been raised against the new mistress, and Choiseul was preparing to fight for her removal. The duel between the mistress and the minister

caused an enormous flutter at Court. Walpole followed the events with keen interest, and his letters teem with allusions to it. Whilst Choiseul was moving heaven and earth to change the king's purpose, Louis and Mme. du Barry were working with equal strenuousness to find a lady willing to run the risk of being ostracized for chaperoning the favourite. Formal presentation at Court under the wing of a *marraine* was an absolute essential to their plans, and without it the reigning beauty could not hope to gain admission to the royal suppers, or flit gaily from palace to palace in the train of the king's household.

"The *grand habits* are made," wrote Walpole on January 31, 1769, to Sir Horace Mann, "and nothing is waiting for her presentation but—what do you think?—some woman of quality to present her. In that servile Court and country the nobility have had spirit enough to decline paying their Court, though the king has stooped à *des bassesses* to obtain it. The Duc de Choiseul will be the victim; and they pretend to say that he has declared he will resign, à l'Anglaise, rather than be *chassé* by such a creature. His indiscretion is astonishing; he has said at his own table, and she has been told so, 'Mme. du Barry est très mal informée; on ne parle pas des Catins chez moi.' Catin diverts herself and King Solomon the wise with tossing oranges into the air after supper, and crying, 'Saute Choiseul! Saute Praslin!' and

then Solomon laughs heartily. Sometimes she flings powder in his sage face, and calls him *Jean Fariné* ! Well ! we are not the foolishlest nation in Europe yet ! It is supposed that the Duc d'Aiguillon will be the successor."

Throwing oranges into the air was not the only joke of its kind that Mme. du Barry perpetrated in order to give vent to her feeling against Choiseul. One day she met a cook on the staircase who seemed to her to resemble the minister. "Are you one of my servants ?" she asked. "Yes, madame," he replied. "Your appearance is inauspicious. Tell my steward that I wish never to see your face again. He is to discharge you instantly." In the evening she told Louis this incident, adding, "I have given my Choiseul notice to quit, when will you discharge yours ?"

After one or two inevitable delays at length the presentation was accomplished, much to the surprise of all the Court ladies. "Well !" continued Walpole, on May 11, "Mme. du Barry has been suddenly presented when nobody thought of it. The king returning from Choisy found the Duc de Richelieu reading a letter, who said, 'Sire, the Comtesse du Barry desires to have the honour of being presented to your Majesty.' 'With all my heart,' replied Solomon ; 'when she will ; tomorrow, if she likes.' Presented she was accordingly, and at night gave a great supper, to which were invited Richelieu and all the Duc de Choiseul's enemies."

Mme. de Genlis gave a full account of the affair—

“I went the day my aunt was presented, and was highly amused, for it was the very same day on which Mme. du Barry was presented. Everybody thought her splendidly and tastefully dressed. By daylight she appeared *passée* and her complexion not clear. Her bearing was dreadfully impudent and her features far from handsome ; but she had beautiful fair hair, charming teeth and a pleasing expression. She looked extremely well at night. We reached the card-tables that evening a few minutes before her. At her entrance all the ladies who were near the door rushed forward in the opposite direction so as to avoid being seated near her. Between her and the last lady in the room there intervened four or five empty places. She regarded this extraordinary and noticeable movement with the utmost coolness ; nothing affected her imperturbability.”¹

She remained impassive to insult throughout her stay at Court, and the story was told of her that when the police caught a writer of scurrilous songs which were aimed at her, and brought the delinquent into her presence in order that she might deal with him herself, she said calmly to the guardians of the trembling wretch, who was expectant of her severe displeasure, “Make him sing the songs through from the beginning and then give him a meal.”

¹ Mme. de Genlis, *Mémoires*.

No sooner was Mme. du Barry received formally at Court than the Duchesses de Grammont, de Choiseul and the Princesse de Beauvau showed open hostility. She was shunned and slighted on all hands. Walpole's description of her at this time was not flattering. He went to Versailles in September with the purpose of seeing the favourite. She was at Mass "without rouge, without powder, and indeed *sans avoir fait sa toilette* ; an odd appearance, as she was so conspicuous, close to the altar and amidst both Court and people. She is pretty, when you consider her ; yet so little striking that I never should have asked who she was. There is nothing bold, assuming or affected in her manner. Her husband's sister was along with her. In the Tribune above, surrounded by prelates, was the amorous and still handsome king. One could not help smiling at the mixture of piety, pomp and carnality."

The struggle between the Du Barry and Choiseul was not all in her favour. On June 14, 1769, Walpole wrote, "Choiseul triumphs over us and Mme. du Barry : her star seems to have lost its influence." On July 19, "Mme. du Barry gains ground, and yet M. de Choiseul carries all his points." A few months later the quarrel was acute. "He is every instant on the point of falling by provoking Mme. du Barry," continued Walpole in October. "The present journey to

Fontainebleau will, I think, decide the victory unless the duke bends."

But the duke did not bend. At the close of 1770 he had fallen and Praslin with him. Carlyle wrote of the affair—

"For stout Choiseul would discern in the Dubarry nothing but a wonderfully dizeden Scarlet-woman; and go on his way as if she were not. Intolerable: the source of sighs, tears, of pettings and poutings; which would not end till 'France' (La France, as she named her royal valet) finally mustered heart to see Choiseul; and with that 'quivering in the chin' (*tremblement du menton*) natural in such case, faltered out a dismissal: dismissal of his last substantial man, but pacification of his Scarlet-woman."

Every month made her power more assured; exile or disgrace awaited those who spoke lightly of her. She, however, bore animosity against none, and, indeed, devoted herself to obtaining pardon for so many that at length Louis said to her impetuously, "We must shut up the Bastille; you will send no one to it." One such offender who won not only her pardon, but whose insult she treated with amusement rather than ill-will, was the Duc de Lauraguais, who had the bad taste to parade his mistress at Fontainebleau under the title of Mme. la Comtesse du Tonneau, this being a play upon words, Tonneau = baril, which was pronounced much the same as Barry. The Duc de Richelieu

warned the king's mistress in a letter: "You cannot too soon repress the insolence of the Comte de Lauraguais," he wrote. "He has picked up a girl in the rue St. Honoré, has furnished a house for her, and gives her openly the title of the Comtesse du Tonneau. You perceive the low reflection intended by this impertinence."

But the mind of Mme. du Barry was occupied by far more serious thoughts than such idle and ill-conceived jests at her expense. A new element had been added to Court life as she knew it, an element which at first puzzled, then displeased, and finally roused her into action. This was the advent into the royal family of the young, childish, inexperienced dauphine, Marie-Antoinette. Born in 1755, the bride was barely fifteen years old when the marriage took place on May 16, 1770, and she was not overwhelmed by the warmth of the reception which awaited her in France. Apart from Louis XV, who was half envious of his grandson, and was inclined to favour the newcomer, the personages with whom Marie-Antoinette was thrown most into contact at Court were his daughters, the three withered Mesdames, Victoire, Sophie and Louise, whose first attitude was one of jealousy; her husband, Louis, the dauphin, who was quite indifferent, and his brothers, the Comtes de Provence and d'Artois, too young to take much notice of her. The king's mistress eyed her with distrust, and called her "la petite

rousse." She could see nothing attractive in red hair, thick lips, sandy complexion, and eyes without eyelashes, she declared. But in spite of this unflattering description, even at this early date, Marie-Antoinette showed great promise of beauty. She was not yet fully grown, her hair was blonde and dressed high, according to the prevailing mode, her face was a good oval, her features irregular. Her aquiline nose was at that time too pronounced to be beautiful ; it did not quite harmonize with the rest of her face, her lower lip protruded too much, but her mouth was as scarlet as a berry, and her skin was fine and white. She held herself with a regal air, and her manner was dignified throughout life. Her education had been sketchy. She hardly knew how to read or write, could not speak French correctly, had been taught to strum very indifferently on the harpsichord, and had not outgrown the childish temptation of shirking her studies, idling and seeking pleasure. But whatever faults she possessed, and they were mostly those of immaturity, she already showed signs of possessing an individuality of her own, and before long proved that she was to be reckoned with at Court. She noticed the king's mistress the very evening of her arrival. Mme. du Barry was seated at supper with the royal household, an honour then only recently accorded her. No doubt her appearance, and the difficulty of understanding her presence there, attracted the girl's attention and aroused her active

curiosity. "What is the Comtesse du Barry's function at Court?" she asked one of the courtiers in a low tone. "To amuse the king," was the diplomatic answer. "Then," remarked the fifteen-year-old Marie-Antoinette, "I mean to be her rival." And truly enough, serious rivalry sprang up between them, although not in the sense implied by the dauphine. The misunderstanding widened as much at Fontainebleau as anywhere. Mme. du Barry loved the palace, and felt herself to be more free there than she was at Versailles; that is to say, she had less ill-feeling on the part of Court ladies to contend against there than elsewhere. She rejoiced in the park and woods, where she wandered at will; she loved the hunt, to which she accompanied the king; and she was childishly happy whenever he arranged any special *fête* for her. Festivities for her benefit took place about the time of the intrusion of the dauphine. One day a special hunt was organized in the favourite's honour, at which two stags were killed. Afterwards the king took her to visit a Pavilion, built by one Bouret, in the forest, which the owner wished to sell to Mme. de Pompadour before her death. A sumptuous repast was ready prepared for the royal huntsman and his mistress, and when they had finished their meal they were invited to step into another apartment where a beautiful statue of Venus was exhibited. The head of the statue had been entirely remodelled to represent Mme. du

Barry, who was naturally overjoyed by this delicate compliment to her beauty. Another day Louis arranged a review of troops, to which he took his mistress, accompanied by two ladies-in-waiting, Mme. de Montmorency and Mme. Grimaldi. In the evening a splendid supper was served in a tent in the forest, this hospitality being offered by the Comte de Châtelet, colonel of the regiment. Mme. du Barry gave vent to extravagant joy, because she was the acknowledged queen of the *fête*. Her only disappointment was that Marie-Antoinette had refused to be present. She was anxious to receive even the slightest mark of attention from that imperious young lady. Without it her cup of happiness was not full, and she spent the remainder of her prosperous years in trying to propitiate the goddess—all in vain.

Meanwhile, Mercy-Argenteau's task of guarding the manners, mind and morals of his charge was becoming onerous. He would doubtless have preferred Marie-Antoinette to show more courtesy, if as little leniency, in her attitude towards the king's mistress. About the time of the review he wrote of her—

“Mme. la Dauphine is growing and becoming more beautiful ; she pleases the king, her husband, and the nation. She conducts herself well in everything that is essential. She is docile when receiving good advice ; one can only reproach her for indulging in occasional childishness ; she

depends a little too much on Mesdames her aunts." ¹

No doubt the aunts counselled her to continue in the dignified attitude they themselves had adopted towards Mme. du Barry, and which was presently to lead Mercy into a situation which required his utmost tact and diplomacy. In other matters, too, his "ward" showed signs of wanting her own way. It was permitted to her to take donkey-rides in the forest. Mention of these rides occurs frequently in Mercy's letters, and there is something fascinating and quaint in the idea of the girl Marie-Antoinette jogging along on her patient animal in the same forest scene that had witnessed the daring equestrian feats of fearless women riders like Diane de Poitiers and Catherine de Médicis. At last the donkey became too tame a beast of burden, and Marie-Antoinette planned a little surprise.

"The riding-party," wrote Mercy, "left the palace very mysteriously, all riding donkeys as usual, until they arrived at a certain rendezvous in the forest, where a horse was in charge of a groom, the only person to whom the plot had been confided. The dauphine mounted the horse, to her intense delight; it was led by the rein of the groom, and other persons walked by the side, and when she returned home all the Court crowded to her reception to take part in her pleasure."

¹ Mercy to Kaunitz. October 20, 1770, Fontainebleau.

Later Mercy wrote, "The dauphine rode on horseback. . . . She cannot endure the idea of riding a donkey, and there is every appearance that these animals will be put down at once."

It was not without qualms of uneasiness that Mercy—the dauphin's sister Madame Elizabeth called him "*le vieux renard*"—observed this growing desire for emancipation. Nor had the Abbé de Vermond, who had charged himself with Marie-Antoinette's education, any better influence upon her. Her hatred of Mme. du Barry had grown during the autumn visit to Fontainebleau, owing to that lady having expressed ill-feeling against the Comtesse de Grammont, one of the dauphine's ladies-in-waiting, who was thereupon sent into exile by the king. Marie-Antoinette, aggrieved by this act of injustice, appealed to Louis, and persisted until Mme. de Grammont was recalled to Court. Louis could refuse her nothing ; he was enchanted by her grace, her charm and dignity, and showed his appreciation by bestowing upon her the jewels which had belonged to the late dauphine, whose husband, Louis of France, died at Fontainebleau in 1765.

The following year Mme. du Barry again offended Marie-Antoinette by having a pavilion constructed in a part of the palace gardens which ran level with the rooms occupied by Mesdames. The windows of the new building overlooked a walk which was reserved for the private use of the royal

family. Nothing daunted, however, the king's mistress persisted in her desire to stand well with the dauphine, and in an interview with Mercy begged him to inform Marie-Antoinette that she desired to pay her respects to her. Mercy, who thought Mme. du Barry "of little intelligence and much levity and vanity, but neither spiteful nor revengeful," would gladly enough have brought about a more conciliatory state of things, but the meeting between the two ladies, when it did take place, was not well calculated to smooth matters over between them. Mme. du Barry, accompanied by the Duchesse d'Aiguillon, duly arrived at the dauphine's apartments, and were received with a certain air of frigidity. Marie-Antoinette addressed the duchess first, as etiquette demanded, and then, turning indefinitely towards her companion, remarked somewhere in mid-air, "The weather has been so bad that one has been unable to go out to-day." The visit came to an early termination, and it speaks well for the good-nature of Mme. du Barry that she accepted this rebuff in an amiable spirit.

In the spring of 1771 there had been an addition to the royal household in the person of Princesse Marie-Josephine-Louise de Savoie, daughter of the King of Sardinia, who came to France to marry the Comte de Provence, afterwards Louis XVIII. The bride arrived at Fontainebleau on May 12, and was met by the king, the dauphin, Marie-

Antoinette, the Comte de Provence and Mesdames. Everybody thought the princess very ugly, but the dauphine greeted her sister-in-law elect with an easy and friendly air, and she was escorted in triumph to the palace. In the evening there was a celebration supper at which all the royal family were present, and the marriage was performed a few days later at Versailles.

The Court paid a second visit to Fontainebleau in 1771, and this year was a very gay one in balls and festivities. In the October following upon his marriage the Comte de Provence held a review of his regiment in the forest, "this ceremony," wrote Mercy, "taking place with all the magnificence they always try to give to those occasions upon which the young prince appears; which is calculated to make him respected." On the 18th the king went hunting, and rode past the troops, but never even took the trouble to glance at them, "which greatly mortified all the officers." That very evening, the 17th, the Comtesse de Provence sickened of the smallpox. During her illness most of the palace festivities ceased. Marie-Antoinette refused to hunt or take part in any of the amusements while her sister-in-law was ill, but on October 28 the balls began, and were held every Monday. "These occasions," continued Mercy, "show the dauphine in her most charming light, she is so gay, so amiable, and so graceful that all the world is enchanted. The king never comes to

these balls, probably because the favourite dare not present herself, and I know it is the presence of Mesdames that serves most to keep her away. But this Monday I spied her up high in one of the boxes, where she was with the king, and both of them were trying not to be seen."

At the beginning of November the first representation of *Zemire et Azor* was given at Fontainebleau and was prodigiously successful. Marmontel's words were set to music by Grétry, and the lion's share of the applause was bestowed upon the composer. The story goes that the day after the performance, as Grétry was crossing one of the galleries of the palace, a soldier presented arms to him, explaining this unusual action by saying, "Ah, sir, I went to see *Zemire et Azor* yesterday." Another story is told of Marmontel and Grétry being presented to Marie-Antoinette in the gallery at Fontainebleau as she was passing through it on her way to Mass. She addressed all her compliments on the success of the opera to Grétry; told him that during the night she had dreamed of the enchanting effect of the trio by Zemire's father and sisters behind the magic mirror; having said this she left them. Grétry in a transport of joy took Marmontel in his arms. "Ah! my friend," cried he; "excellent music may be made of this." "And execrable words," coolly observed Marmontel, to whom not a single compliment had been addressed. In later years Napoleon

had the same play performed, and the composer was given a place of honour beside the emperor. The account of the play given by Marmontel in his *Memoirs* bears witness to the fact that some share in the onus of the production was borne by him—

“When *Zemire et Azor* was announced at Fontainebleau a report was spread that it was the story of ‘Beauty and the Beast’ brought upon the stage, and that the principal character would creep on all fours. But I very quietly allowed them to say what they pleased. I had given very particular directions about the machinery and dresses ; and made no doubt of my intentions having been fulfilled. Neither the tailor nor machinist, however, had taken the trouble to read my directions, but had made their arrangements according to the tale of ‘Beauty and the Beast.’

“My friends were anxious about the success of my work; Grétry looked dejected; Clairval himself, who had acted so heartily all my other characters, expressed repugnance to appear in this. I asked him the reason. ‘How can you expect,’ said he, ‘that I can give any interest to a character in which I should be hideous?’ ‘Hideous!’ said I; ‘you will not be at all hideous. The first glimpse of you will be frightful ; but this ugliness will be united with dignity and grace.’ ‘Only look, then,’ said he, ‘at the beast’s dress which is being prepared, for I am told it is shocking.’ This was

the evening before the representation, so that there was not a moment to lose. I asked them to show me Azor's dress ; it was with great difficulty I prevailed upon the tailor to be so complaisant. He bade me be quite easy and trust to him. But I insisted ; and the Duc de Duras, after ordering him to take me to the warehouse, was so good as to accompany me. ' Well,' said the tailor disdainfully to his servants, ' show the gentleman the beast's dress.' What did I see ! a pantaloon just like the skin of a monkey, with a long bare tail, a naked back, enormous claws for each of the four hoofs, two long horns in the head, and the most hideous mask, with boars' teeth. I shrieked with horror, and declared that my piece should not be acted under this ridiculous and monstrous disguise. ' Then what would you have had ?' asked the tailor proudly. ' I would have wished you,' replied I, ' to read my directions, and you would have seen that I asked a dress for a man, not for a monkey.' ' A man's dress for a beast !' ' And who told you that Azor was a beast ?' ' The tale tells me so.' ' The tale is not my work ; and my work shall not be acted till all this be changed.' ' It is too late.' ' Then I will go and ask the king's permission not to shock him with this hideous spectacle ; and I will tell him the reason.' Our men then softened, and asked what was to be done. ' The simplest thing in the world,' replied I ; ' tiger-coloured pantaloons, shoes and gloves of the same, a dolman

of purple satin, black hair, waving and picturesquely disposed ; an ugly, but not deformed mask, nor at all resembling a snout.’ ”

With difficulty this costume was procured. Clairval found it “dignified and commanding.” “I was in a corner of the orchestra,” continued Marmontel, “and behind me was a seat full of Court ladies. When Azor, on his knees at the feet of Zemire, sang to her, I heard these ladies say to each other, ‘He is not ugly now’ ; and immediately after, ‘He is handsome.’ ”

Marmontel was in Fontainebleau again during the performance of *Didon*, shortly before his election to the perpetual secretaryship of the French Academy. The success of this play was enormous, the king remarking, “It is the only opera in which I have felt any interest.” The visit was in every way satisfactory. “We had walks in the forest, hunting-parties, horse-races,” wrote Marmontel, “parties of pleasure at Tomeri, where we were entertained with sumptuous dinners of fish, and excellent grapes. Whenever the theatre was open we had places in the box of Mme. d’Angiviller, whose house was ours, and who, as well as her husband, bestowed a pleasing attention in directing towards us the notice of the numerous and excellent company of which her house was always full. My wife, in short, enjoyed all the pleasures which could be assembled by a youthful and magnificent Court, and everything which could prove how

much she herself was esteemed and loved by this elegant society ; so that both for her and for me, the abode of Fontainebleau was a continual enchantment."

The journey of the Court to Fontainebleau was called the *second grand voyage*, and took place very regularly in the autumn. These journeys gave rise to enormous expenditure, owing to the large number of retainers with which Louis XV travelled. The palace was falling into bad repair, and many of the visitors were lodged in the town. Their names were written up in chalk on the doors of the lodgings provided for them, much as was the custom at the inns. They were obliged to provide their own furniture, linen, and often food. When the king arrived it was customary for the Governor of the Palace to meet him on the outskirts of the forest, and a formal ceremony took place. The Provost made a short speech, and then a basket of fruit, or some such offering, was made, and the keys were handed to the king. The hunt in this reign was most picturesque in effect, the costumes being royal blue with red and white facings. Marie-Antoinette wore a hunting-dress of royal blue velvet and a hat adorned with large white plumes. Mesdames always wore green. Towards the close of the reign the dauphine was at the height of her popularity. She was the idol of France, her beauty, her natural dignity and simplicity winning many friends for her. An incident

which occurred during a stag-hunt increased the general admiration in which she was held. She was following the hunt in her coach when the stag, closely pursued by the hounds, leapt into an enclosure where a peasant was tilling. Mad with fear, the animal rushed upon the man and wounded him dangerously with its antlers. The peasant's wife fled shrieking to the huntsmen, in the midst of whom was the king, who commanded some one to look after the wounded man. But the dauphine coming upon the scene left her coach to attend to the woman, who was fainting, gave her all the money she had with her, and assured her of her protection. She actually wept in sympathy, and no doubt the spectators thought it well to weep too, "to the number," wrote Mercy, "of more than a hundred." When all was done that could be done the dauphin, who was very slow-witted, seemed to think that he too was called upon to do something, and he produced all the money he had with him and gave it to the sufferer. He was always slow to take the initiative, and depended a good deal on his young wife for hints as to what his position demanded. "Mme. la Dauphine suivait la nature," aptly remarked the Princesse de Beauvau, "et M. le Dauphin suivait Mme. la Dauphine."

The little balls given by Marie-Antoinette continued on Mondays. They were quite informal. "They observe no sort of ceremony," wrote

Mercy ; “there are not even places set apart for the royal family, all of whom sit down, anywhere, side by side with the ladies of the Court.”

All present at these balls were dressed in white, the ladies in white dominoes which were pleated down the back, were worn over small hoops, and had long trains and floating sleeves, whilst the men were in white with blue velvet coats. The dances lasted from five to ten. There was also a special dress for the king’s private suppers, in this case a pleated *sacque* with lace lappets. Louis was by no means abstemious. His usual supper was said to consist of four plates of different kinds of soup, a whole pheasant, a partridge, salad, ham, a plate of mutton seasoned with garlic, pastry, fruit, and hard boiled eggs, or equivalent dishes.

Fontainebleau was still the scene of a number of festivities. In 1773, two years after the marriage of the Comte de Provence, his brother, the Comte d’Artois, afterwards Charles X, was married to another of the daughters of the King of Sardinia, Marie-Thérèse de Savoie. The princess arrived at Fontainebleau in the middle of November. She was not very prepossessing in appearance ; Mercy described her as “Very small, of very commonplace figure, although one cannot justly say that its defects are shocking ; her skin is white enough, the face thin, the nose much too long and badly finished, the eyes not well shaped, a big mouth—altogether an irregular physiognomy, unattractive

and most vulgar." The ceremony took place at Versailles, and a banquet followed at which Mme. du Barry in resplendent jewels sat "glittering like the sun."

It was almost her last triumph.

In the spring of the following year the king was attacked by smallpox, and Mme. du Barry had to leave the Court. On May 10 Louis breathed his last. His mistress remained in exile. Fontainebleau knew her no more. The last sad act of her life took place almost twenty years afterwards in November 1793, when she suffered on the guillotine, a victim of the Revolution. Lamartine gave a pathetic description of the end : "The passage of the courtesan to the scaffold was but one lamentation," he wrote. "Under the knife she still wept. The Court had enervated her soul. She alone, amongst all the women executed, died a coward, because she died neither for opinion, for virtue, nor for love, but for vice. She dishonoured the scaffold as she had dishonoured the throne."¹

Even in the face of this condemnation it is impossible to forget the many good points shown by Louis XV's last mistress. Her good-nature, her humour, her friendliness and amiability under insult tend to wipe from remembrance her coarseness, vulgarity and ignorance. To forget her faults is to sympathize with her more than she

¹ Lamartine, *L'Histoire des Girondins*.

deserves. Carlyle's last word prevents any ill-considered leniency—

“She is gone : and her place knows her no more. Vanish, false Sorceress, into Space ! Needless to hover at neighbouring Ruel ; for thy day is done. Shut are the royal palace-gates for evermore ; hardly in coming years shalt thou, under cloud of night, descend once, in black domino, like a black night-bird, and disturb the fair Antoinette's music-party in the Park ; all Birds of Paradise flying from thee, and musical windpipes growing mute. Thou unclean, yet unmalignant, not unpitiable thing ! What a course was thine : from that first truckle-bed (in Joan of Arc's country) where thy mother bore thee, with tears, to an unnamed father ; forward, through lowest subterranean depths, and over highest sunlit heights of Harlotdom and Rascaldom—to the guillotine-axe, which sheers away thy vainly whimpering head ! Rest there uncursed ; only buried and abolished ; what else befitted thee ? ”¹

Louis XV, senile and degraded, was dead, the queenless years were over, and Marie-Antoinette reigned beside her still youthful husband. The reign proved but an expiation of all preceding excesses, extravagances and dissipations. Yet the earlier years of it were calm enough and uneventful. Fontainebleau, cleansed of its shamelessness, continued to be the yearly resort of the royal

¹ Carlyle, *The French Revolution*.

household. The king loved the chase passionately, the queen followed gladly in her carriage. The rooms occupied by Marie-Antoinette in the palace seem sacred to her still. Others have come and gone in those which belonged to fair women of an earlier day, but the Revolution and the Empire,—the one laying a destructive, the other a restoring finger upon the palace,—have both failed to remove the traces of her presence. Her boudoir bears evidence still of the graceful refinement and artistic skill of her day. The king, it is said, forged some of the ironwork in the windows. Her bedroom, though it harboured five Maries, two of whom came after her, contains the original furniture used by her, and some fine tapestries, especially designed for her but not finished till too late. Her bath-room, with its quaint window into the boudoir, had guipure-covered walls. She it was who gambled in the Salon de Jeu, playing for enormous stakes, and all night long till early morn, whilst Mercy was in despair, and had the temerity to chide her ; but she pouted and did not care, and linking her arm familiarly in that of one of her ladies-in-waiting, passed laughing through the anteroom to emphasize her nonchalance. She was but a naughty school-girl still, in spite of all her dignity and queenship. In a school of terrible suffering she learnt womanhood and motherhood in after years.

On October 22, 1775, nearly eighteen months after the accession of Louis XVI, Dr. Johnson wrote

to Mr. Robert Levet from Paris: "We came yesterday from Fontainebleau, where the Court is now. We went to see the king and queen at dinner, and the queen was so impressed by Miss [Thrale] that she sent one of the gentlemen to inquire who she was."

The great doctor's laconic comments on this visit to the palace appear in "The diurnal register of his life and observations for twenty-six days from October 10 to November 4, in a small paper book entitled *France II*—

"October 18, *Wednesday*.—We went to Fontainebleau, which we found a large mean town, crowded with people. The forest, thick with woods, very extensive. *October 19, Thursday*.—We went and saw the king and queen at dinner. We saw the other ladies at dinner. Mme. Elizabeth with the Princess of Guimené. At night we went to a comedy. I neither saw nor heard. Drunken women. Mrs. Th. preferred one to the other. *October 20, Friday*.—We saw the queen mount in the forest. Brown habit; rode aside: one lady rode aside. The queen's horse light grey; martingale. She galloped. We then went to the apartments, and admired them. Then wandered through the palace. In the passages, stalls and shops. Painting in fresco by a great master, worn out. We saw the king's horses and dogs. The dogs almost all English—degenerate. The horses not much commended. The stables cool; the

kennel filthy. At night the ladies went to the opera."

A feature of this period was the introduction of horse-racing at Fontainebleau. The sport became fast and furious. Through it an entirely new element entered into Court life, an element which Mercy regarded with something akin to horror. It shared with high play the power to evoke his strongest and most forcible epithets of opprobrium. Indeed his letters of the later seventies contain severe strictures on the queen's love of pleasure and manner of occupying her time. "I observe," he wrote in 1776, "that the amusements of the queen are multiplying less by variety of the objects than by the greater time taken up in pure dissipation, which consumes three parts of the day." Music, hunting, theatres, and especially horse-racing, were included in these occupations. The racecourse was a league and a half from the palace, and the queen watched the races from a gallery on the second storey of a pavilion specially erected for the purpose. A great crowd was received in this building, even people who, according to Mercy's view of Court etiquette, were dressed "in a *negligé* scarcely decent." Moreover, a great deal of betting went on, and the bets were "never arranged without many arguments and much noise and tumult."

Mercy wrote sternly of these doings: "The horse-races were very deplorable events, and, I

even dare to say it, unseemly, as the queen was present. I went to the first race-day on horse-back ; and I took great care to keep in the crowd at some distance from the queen's pavilion, into which all the young men entered, booted, and in riding-dress. In the evening the queen, who had perceived me, asked me, while at play, why I did not come up into her pavilion at the races. I answered, loudly enough to be heard by the many feather-pates present, that the reason I had not come was that I was in riding-boots and dress ; and that I had never been accustomed to imagine one could appear before the queen in such attire. Her Majesty smiled, and the culprits glanced very angrily at me.

“On the second race-day I went in a carriage and wearing town dress. I went up into the pavilion, where I found a great table spread with a simple collation, which was being positively pillaged by a mob of young men, unsuitably attired, making such a clamour and a noise that one could not hear oneself speak. And in the midst of this crowd were the queen, Madame, Madame d'Artois, Madame Elizabeth, Monsieur, and the Comte d'Artois, the last named running up- and down-stairs, betting, in despair when he lost, abandoning himself to pitiful exultation when he won, flinging himself into the crowd of people to cheer his postillions or jockeys, and presenting to the queen those who had won a race for him.”

Times were changing, Court etiquette was lax, the queen was no longer followed by a suite, she moved through crowded ante-chambers without ceremony, without dignity. She played billiards in the gallery with a "whirlpool" of youth about her. She sat at the head of a table gambling, gambling ceaselessly with all the young fops and ne'er-do-well courtiers pressing round to see the game, whilst important people stood silent on the outskirts, waiting for a word or a favour from royalty, which they never received. The stakes were enormous. The queen lost or won heavily every night. The Duc de Chartres was said to have lost thirty thousand louis in one night's play at the palace, and M. de Chalabre, forty-two thousand louis, no inconsiderable sum.

The following year things were even worse. There was more horse-racing at Fontainebleau, and the gambling was incessant, with fewer interruptions than ever before. For the last three weeks, complained Mercy in October 1777, "reading has ceased, the taste for music seems to have disappeared entirely, riding has been given up, in deference to the idea that her health may suffer, the chief occupation is long and certainly very idle conversation with the chief favourite, the Comtesse de Polignac, and gambling is the one interest in life." All the time not taken up by actual play was filled with plans for it in the evening. And again, in a letter to Joseph II,

the queen's brother : "There are no limits nor measures in her play, nor in the hours she keeps at night, which' is the real cause of the king sleeping elsewhere. The *séances* at the Princesse de Guéméné's have also taken their usual course again, moments of retreat and of reading have been done away with ; marks of attention and regard for the king diminish, and it is with real grief that I inform your Majesty that for a whole month things have taken a most annoying turn. Wholesale dissipations are indulged in here, spectacles, horse-racing and gambling-parties, which I greatly deprecate, all the more because the Abbé de Vermond has cancelled his visit, after having energetically declared that his presence in the midst of this turmoil can be of no possible use to the queen."

The emperor replied to this report on December 3—

"The news of that miserable stay at Fontainebleau has given me real pain. The queen has only written me two insignificant words, although she assured the empress that she would moderate and arrange her games of hazard with more decency. As for me, I have written her sternly by this courier, and have drawn a picture of what the English people at Vienna say of the sojourn at Fontainebleau, which they compare to gambling at Spa."

Enough said ! Something surely must be

pleaded in extenuation, if not in excuse, of her indiscretion. Marie-Antoinette was received open-armed by a perverse Court and an ardent nation. She had never awakened to the true state of national affairs. Walking on the edge of a precipice she saw nothing but the love she lavished and the love she inspired. Her eyes were opened too late to actualities, and, in the horror of what she then saw, her own share of indifference and carelessness diminished to a negligible quantity, and must be forgiven.

Marie-Antoinette belongs to Versailles and to the Trianons more than to Fontainebleau. Louis XVI performed but few State duties there, and the thread of its story was lost in the tangle of the Revolution. The tragedy of the Terror was played at Versailles, at the Tuileries, anywhere but at Fontainebleau. Much of the furniture was destroyed, pictures burnt, and bronzes converted into coinage; a few prisoners were lodged there, and some trees of liberty were planted in 1793. The palace was named among the residences, buildings, grounds and forests reserved for the king by the decree of the National Assembly of June 1, 1791. For ten years it lay deserted and idle, only to spring into life again with renewed vigour and beauty under the Empire.



EMPRESS JOSEPHINE
(A REPUDIATED WIFE)

CHAPTER XIII

EMPRESS JOSEPHINE

(A REPUDIATED WIFE)

MME. DE MAINTENON's apartments in the palace are the most commanding in position, Marie-Antoinette's are the grandest, Josephine's the most intimate. They have suffered little change since the day she lived in them and her presence animates them still. Fontainebleau belongs in the main to three reigns, François I, Henri IV and Napoleon. Napoleon coming last, his imprint is firmer. He shed Imperial splendour over all the palace and stamped his powerful personality on his surroundings there as elsewhere. He loved the "demeure des siècles," as he called it, with a love so great that, while the palace exists, time will fail wholly to eradicate his touch. Fontainebleau is Imperial and will remain so, though it may stand for centuries on Republican ground.

Napoleon expended over ten million francs in restoring and redecorating the interior and improving the estate. "It would be difficult," wrote Fontaine, "to describe in detail the different

works and embellishments added to the palace of Fontainebleau under the Empire ; these works, like all those executed according to Napoleon's orders, whether at Paris, at Saint-Cloud, whether at Compiègne and other royal houses have been carried out without exception, on the principle of not destroying anything already in existence, and of completing all things possible in accordance with the original designs, whilst adapting them to the higher standard of the requirements and conveniences of the period."

Napoleon loved to gather brilliant crowds around him and to offer worthy entertainment. But he did not always succeed in amusing people ; a fact due rather to the lack of the spirit of hospitality than the material and visible signs of it. When receptions were held those who had the *entrée* presented themselves at the empress's apartments. Ladies sat down in silence when admitted, gentlemen remained standing against the wall in the order in which they entered. The emperor moved about restlessly, never attempting to put people at their ease, often seeming not to notice them, avoiding the slightest appearance of familiarity and occasionally uttering unkind or disparaging speeches. "All who were about the emperor suffered from ennui," wrote Mme. de Rémusat, who devoted a chapter of her Memoirs to life at Fontainebleau ; "he did so himself, and frequently complained of the fact, resenting the dull and

constrained silence which was in reality imposed by him. I have heard him say, ‘It is a singular thing ; I have brought together a lot of people at Fontainebleau ; I wanted them to amuse themselves. I arranged every sort of pleasure for them, and here they are with long faces, all looking dull and tired.’ ”

Formal entertainment of this kind was not to Josephine’s taste. Ceremony and etiquette bored her. When in town she busied herself with milliners, jewellers, art dealers, soothsayers, any one, in short, from whom she could extract an hour’s pleasure in exchange for the money which flowed like water through her hands. She missed mild excitements of this kind when in the country, but instead of them occupied herself with gardening, to which she was passionately devoted. Her garden at Malmaison had a European reputation ; she lavished much time and more money on plants and flowers, she studied botany and was never tired of casting aside the more artificial aspects of life to be in touch with nature. The following letter to her daughter Hortense gives a glimpse of this simple side of Josephine’s temperament—

“ In the woods of Fontainebleau you will find, my dear Hortense, a plant of the *Chenopodio-Morus* family, called *blète effilée*. You will distinguish it by the peculiarity of its fruit, being

precisely of the form and colour of the strawberry. Being one of those plants which do not easily thrive on being transplanted, you must take care to carry away a good portion of the grassy turf which surrounds it along with the light earth with which it is nurtured. The whole must be well packed up and forwarded by Phédart's coach, which returns at short stages. Spire, my gardener, tells me that he has transplanted *blète* from its native soil into earth suited to it, and that on being cultivated it produced the common strawberry. I think this must be a mistake, but as the experiment will cost but little trouble I should like to try it."

Amidst all her grandeur Josephine could be very homely.

The imposing name Marie-Josèphe-Rose Tascher de la Pagerie belonged to a not very imposing person. Born in the island of Martinique on June 23, 1763, "la belle Creole" was a child of the sun, a creature of love and laughter. "I ran, I jumped, I danced, from morning to night; no one restrained the wild movements of my childhood," was Josephine's own comment on the freedom of her early years. At the age of ten she was a young woman, already showing forth the characteristics that were hers in maturity. Her figure was flexible and of sinuous grace, not tall, but well proportioned. Her hair crowned her head in abundance, her hands and feet were small



THE EMPRESS JOSEPHINE.

From a painting by Prud'hon, Louvre, Paris.

By permission of Braun, Clément & Co., Dornach and Paris.

and beautiful, her voice low and caressing. She lived simply, in touch with nature, surrounded by slave-children. In the morning she bathed in the cool streams, in the evening she devoted her time to music, to dancing, to reading. At the age of sixteen she was sent to France, to the husband who was awaiting her there, Alexandre de Beauharnais. For a brief year they were happy, this youthful pair, but differences soon parted them. In 1781 the birth of a son, Eugène, Viceroy of Italy in after years, brought them together for a time, but De Beauharnais proved unfaithful, and after the birth of Hortense in April 1783 an open rupture occurred between husband and wife. Josephine withdrew to a convent and awaited her divorce. The decision of the court was in her favour and she was soon free. It had been her intention to return to Martinique, but the Marquis de Beauharnais, father of her divorced husband, offered her a home. In 1785 Josephine settled down with him in a house at Fontainebleau, and devoted herself to the bringing up of her children. Her aunt and her daughter's godmother lived in the same village, and life passed quietly among these friends in a round of domestic duties and long walks and rides in the forest. She gazed often at the palace walls, never dreaming that in the future she would dwell within them as empress.

After spending a long year with the Beau-

harnais family, Josephine paid a visit to the island where she had spent her happy childhood, and to which she returned a divorced woman with two small children worse than fatherless.

While she remained in Martinique the Revolution swept like a torrent over horror-stricken France. Beauharnais, embroiled in the political struggles of the time, bethought him of his former wife, and presently urged her to return to him in Paris. For four years of danger and unrest she lived with him in the Rue de l'Université and gathered round her a circle of Parisians. She was now twenty-seven years of age, in the fulness of her elegant and attractive beauty, amplifying a faulty education and cloaking it under the veneer that French society gave her.

As the Revolution progressed Beauharnais was appointed General-in-Chief of the army of the Rhine. Josephine remained in Paris, escaping occasionally from her little home to visit Mme. de Renaudin, her aunt, in Fontainebleau. In January 1794 Beauharnais was arrested. Josephine did all she could to obtain his release, but in vain. The following April she was herself imprisoned. "There comes the wife of Beauharnais," wrote Carlyle, "soon to be the widow: she that is Josephine Tascher Beauharnais; that should be Josephine Empress Bonaparte—for a black divineness of the Tropics prophesied, long since, that she should be a queen and more. . . ."

In captivity, and fearing death, Josephine passed many troubled hours. Her children, fatherless and motherless to all purposes, remained at Fontainebleau in the care of Mme. de Renaudin.

Widowed, thirty-one years of age, and devoted to her children, Josephine was set free after the death of Robespierre. Her future seemed a blank. A struggle, owing to scarcity of ways and means, ensued. But society in Paris was gathering afresh. "In the *salon* of Tallien," continued Carlyle, "Josephine, *veuve* Beauharnais, meets the small, bronze-complexioned artillery officer of Toulon, home from the Italian wars. Somewhat forlorn for the present, stands that artillery officer; looks with those deep, earnest eyes of his into a future as waste as the most. He stands there, without work or outlook, in this forsaken manner; glances, nevertheless, it would seem, at the kind glance of Josephine Beauharnais; and for the rest, with severe countenance, with open eyes and closed lips, waits what will betide."

One of the first things that happened was a marriage between these two, both island born, both destined to achieve much, to suffer much. March 9, 1796, was the day of the ceremony, Paris the place, and now began the ascent of the giddy heights of power which is common knowledge. The household inaugurated its parabolic career in the rue Chantereine, Josephine now showing forth the full bloom of her beauty,

personal charm, and her many excellent qualities. She was gentle, good-natured, genial and tactful to all with whom she came in contact. She was not clever, but possessed the suppleness and warmth of a Southern race, with powers of dissimulation which occasionally led her too far astray for safety. Napoleon's fierce passion for her became subdued and set in a genuine affection which outlasted their separation. In 1799 they were established at the Luxembourg, in 1800 at the Tuileries. In 1802 Napoleon was made First Consul ; at length he was on the verge of becoming Emperor. Fontainebleau is in sight once more.

Napoleon, realizing the far-reaching influence of the Church upon the masses, desired that Pius VII should perform the ceremony of consecration at his coronation. He dispatched Caffarelli to Rome with a letter containing his request. This letter was written at Cologne on September 15, 1804. By November 2 the Pope had commenced his journey to Paris in the company of the Cardinals Antonelli, Borgia, di Pietro, Caselli, Braschi, and de Bayane. On the 25th they arrived at Fontainebleau. Napoleon was staying at the palace. He had given instructions that his Holiness was to be treated with highest distinction whilst passing through French territory, but he preferred to make his own meeting accidental rather than formal. This apparent simplicity required some preliminary arrangement. Napoleon

dressed for the hunt and set forth on horseback. He took the road to Nemours, by which he knew the Pope and his suite must arrive. At the Croix de Saint-Hérem he was informed by couriers that Pius VII was approaching. A solemn and important moment was made to appear as though it were an everyday occurrence. Napoleon dismounted, the Pope left his carriage, stepping on to the muddy forest road in his white robes and white shoes. Whilst they embraced six Imperial carriages drove up and the first halted to receive the illustrious guest. With prearranged nonchalance Napoleon stepped into the carriage by the right door, taking the seat of honour, whilst the Pope entered by the left. They arrived at the palace in the midst of a large gathering of troops and to the joyous firing of guns.

They were received at the foot of the horse-shoe staircase by Cardinal Caprara and the Grand Officers of Napoleon's household. Together Pope and Napoleon ascended the stairway. Then his Holiness, parting from his host, was conducted by the Grand Chamberlain, the Grand-Marshal of the palace and the Grand-Master of Ceremonies to his own apartments.

After resting, the Pope had an interview with Napoleon, to whose study he was conducted by the Grand Officers of the household. After that came a State visit to Josephine, Pius VII being shown to her apartments by a lady-of-honour.

Josephine herself accompanied him through her rooms when he withdrew. She imparted to him the fact that she had not been married by religious rites, and Napoleon was obliged to agree to an ecclesiastical marriage taking place before the coronation, although he reserved the right of having the ceremony performed in secret.

In the afternoon Napoleon returned the Pope's call. On both occasions there was much formality, and the interviews were lengthy. Alfred de Vigny based upon these conferences his inimitable story of Napoleon's overbearing attitude, and the access of temper in which he indulged in the presence of the venerable Pontiff. The tale is told by a supposed eye-witness, Renaud—

"We were at Fontainebleau. The Pope had just arrived. The emperor had waited impatiently for his coming to anoint him at his coronation. . . . Pius VII entered alone. Bonaparte shut the door behind him with the dispatch of a gaoler. I felt thoroughly frightened, I must confess, on finding myself the third in such company. However, I remained voiceless and motionless, looking and listening with all the powers of my mind.

"The Pope was of lofty stature ; his face was long, sallow, care-worn, but full of a holy dignity and unbounded benevolence. His dark eyes were large and brilliant ; his mouth was half open with a friendly smile, to which his projecting chin gave a strong expression of shrewdness and intelligence—

a smile which had nothing of political insensibility, but everything of Christian kindness. A white cap covered his long hair, which was black, but marked with broad silvery streaks. He wore a short mantle of red velvet, carelessly thrown over his curved shoulders, and his robe trailed over his feet. He entered slowly, with the calm and discreet step of an aged matron. He went and seated himself, with downcast eyes, in one of the large Roman arm-chairs, gilt, and decorated with eagles, and waited to hear what the other Italian had to say.

“Ah, sir, what a scene ! What a scene ! Methinks I behold it still.”

After listening calmly to all that Napoleon had to say the Pope “smiled sadly, raised his eyes to the ceiling, and remarked, after sighing restfully, as though he wished to confide the thought to an invisible guardian angel—

“‘Commediante !’

“Bonaparte jumped out of his chair and bounded across the room like a leopard that has been shot. . . .

“The same calm in the Pope’s attitude, the same repose on his face. For the second time he raised his eyes to heaven, and, having heaved another profound sigh, he smiled bitterly and said—

“‘Tragediante !’

“Bonaparte, who at this moment was at the

end of the room, leaning upon the marble chimney-piece, darted forward as straight as an arrow upon the old man. I thought he would have killed him. But he stopped short, lifted off the table a vase of Sèvres china on which were painted the Château Saint-Angelo and the Capitol and, hurling it upon the andirons and the marble hearth, crushed it under his heel."

The conference at Fontainebleau lasted for three days, by which time the Pope had agreed to his host's wishes. Then came the departure to Paris, followed by the ceremony at Notre Dame on December 2, 1804.

Josephine was Empress of France. But she had not reached this eminent position without dire forebodings, which were realized before many years had passed. "As wife of the First Consul," she said, "I was happy indeed, because I was enabled to render him important services; but, elevated to the rank of empress, I found all the avenues to the throne so beset by men of every condition, and every faction, that I ceased to exert the same empire over Napoleon's mind."

✓In the autumn of 1807 the Court spent three months at Fontainebleau amidst extravagant festivities and entertainment. An extraordinary medley of persons was assembled at the palace, princes both foreign and French, nobility of every degree, ministers, ambassadors, military men, courtiers, ladies of rank and station, in short the

entire entourage of a great Court of earlier days. Napoleon combined work with recreation. He rose at seven o'clock, held his *lever*, breakfasted by himself, and, on days when there was no hunting, he remained in his study, attending to State affairs and holding councils until five or six o'clock in the evening. Whilst Napoleon worked, Josephine sat in her drawing-room, robed in gorgeous attire, with her daughter and her ladies, and received visits from the people staying in the palace. "Such of us as cared to do so," wrote Mme. de Rémusat, "might occupy ourselves with needlework, and this was a great relief to the fatigue of idle and trifling conversation. Mme. Bonaparte did not like to be alone, but she had no taste for any kind of occupation. At four o'clock we left her; she then gave herself up to the business of her toilette, we to the business of ours—and this was a momentous affair. A number of Parisian shopkeepers had brought their very best merchandise to Fontainebleau, and they easily disposed of it by presenting themselves at our rooms.

"Between five and six o'clock the emperor would go down to his wife's apartment, and then drive out alone with her, before dinner. At six o'clock we dined, and afterwards we met in the theatre, or at the apartment of the person who was charged with providing the especial amusement of the particular evening. . . . The different

evenings of the week were to be passed in the respective apartments of the great personages. On one evening the emperor would receive ; there would be music and afterwards cards. On two other evenings there would be a play ; followed, on one, by a ball in the apartment of the Grand-Duchess of Berg, and on the other, by a ball in the apartment of the Princess Borghese ; on a fifth there would be a reception and cards in the apartment of the empress. The princes and ministers were to give dinners and to invite all the members of the Court in turn. The Grand-Marshal was to do the same ; twenty-five covers were to be laid at his table every day. The Lady-of-Honour was likewise to entertain. And, lastly, there was to be a table for all those who had not received a special invitation elsewhere. Princes and kings were to dine with the emperor only when invited. He reserved to himself the liberty of his *tête-à-tête* dinner with his wife, and chose whom he pleased when he thought fit to depart from that rule. Hunting took place on fixed days, and the guests were invited to accompany the hunt, either on horse-back or in elegant *calèches*.

“The emperor took it into his head that the ladies should have a hunting-costume, and to that the empress agreed very willingly. . . . Each princess selected a different colour for herself and her household. The costume of the empress was

amaranth velvet, embroidered with gold, with a toque also embroidered in gold, and a plume of white feathers. All the ladies-in-waiting wore amaranth. Queen Hortense chose blue and silver ; Mme. Murat, pink and silver ; Princess Borghese, lilac and silver. The dress was a sort of tunic, or short *redingote*, in velvet, worn over a gown of embroidered white satin ; velvet boots to match the dress, and a toque with a white plume. The emperor and all the gentlemen wore green coats, with gold or silver lace. These brilliant costumes, worn either on horseback or in carriages, and by a numerous assemblage, had a charming effect in the beautiful forest of Fontainebleau."

A great many celebrities were present at the palace for the wedding of Jérôme Bonaparte, King of Westphalia, to Catherine of Wurtemberg ; the Prince Primate, the Archduke Ferdinand of Wurzburg, Prince William, brother of the King of Prussia, amongst others.

At this time, wrote the Duchesse d'Abrantes in her Memoirs, " the Court of Fontainebleau was more brilliant than during the reign of Louis XIV, each successive day exceeding the past in magnificence. . . . I received an invitation, or rather an order, to repair to Fontainebleau for a few days. . . . No language can convey a clear idea of the magnificence, the magical luxury, which now surrounded the emperor ; the diamonds, jewels and flowers, that gave splendour to his *fêtes* ; the

loves and joys that spread enchantment around, and the intrigues which the actors in them fancied quite impenetrable, whereas they were perhaps even more easily discernible than at the Tuileries. When the mornings were fine, and in October and November of that year the weather was superb, we went out hunting and breakfasted in the forest. The ladies wore a uniform of chamois cashmere, with collars and trimmings of green cloth embroidered with silver, and a hat of black velvet, with a large plume of white feathers.

“Nothing could be more exhilarating than the sight of seven or eight open carriages whirling rapidly through the alleys of that magnificent forest, filled with ladies in this elegant costume, their waving plumes blending harmoniously with the autumnal foliage; the emperor and his numerous suite darting like a flight of arrows past them in pursuit of a stag which, exhibiting at one moment its proud antlers from the summit of a mossy rock, in the next was flying with the fleetness of the wind to escape from its persecutors. The gentlemen’s hunting-uniform was of green cloth, turned up with amaranth velvet, and laced *à la* Brandenbourg on the breast and pockets with gold and silver; it was gay, but I preferred the more unpretending shooting-costume.”

At this time, and in the midst of all these festivities, the Imperial divorce was the general subject of conversation in the retirement of private

apartments, though never spoken of in public. Hortense had lost her eldest son, the suggested heir to the empire. Napoleon was preoccupied and thoughtful, riding frequently in the forest attended by a single servant.

The Duchesse d'Abrantes, alarmed for his safety, questioned Marshal Duroc as to the wisdom of this proceeding, but the latter replied that the emperor refused to listen to all remonstrance, so that little could be done to ensure his safety. "The forest is large," concluded Duroc, "and there is no ascertaining what direction he may choose, so that these solitary rides often cause me uneasiness."

Josephine undoubtedly guessed something of their import. She endeavoured to appear gay and content, but inwardly she was filled with a sense of impending grief and disaster. Some of the reports reached her ears ; at other times a significant silence filled her equally with dread. "Once when I had been paying my respects to her," wrote the Duchesse d'Abrantes, "she did me the honour to say to me, 'Madame Junot, they will never be satisfied till they have driven me from the throne of France—they are inveterate against me.' She meant the emperor's family."

It was at Fontainebleau that the wily Fouché hinted clearly that she should sacrifice her own interests to those of the country and the emperor. Fouché acted thus without Napoleon's sanction,

and when the latter heard from his wife's lips what had passed between her and the Minister of the Police he was duly angered by this disregard of his wishes. For a time the matter was shelved, Napoleon endeavouring to remove Josephine's suspicions.

But successes in Italy, troubles in Spain, and the subjugation of Austria convinced Napoleon that his position demanded more than ever the consolidation and stability which an heir to the throne alone could give. After dictating the terms of the Treaty of Schönbrunn on October 14, 1809, Napoleon returned to Paris, writing to Josephine : "My friend—I leave in an hour. I shall arrive at Fontainebleau on the 26th or 27th; meet me there with the ladies of the Court."

On the date mentioned Napoleon reached the palace before Josephine had left Saint-Cloud, where she was staying. He sent a messenger to her at once, and she arrived at Fontainebleau early in the afternoon in response to his urgent summons. He received her coldly and with indifference. "And so you are come, madame," was his brusque remark. "It is time ; I was about to set out for Saint-Cloud."

The happiness she displayed in his company melted this mood, however, and he became affectionate towards her. Signs were not wanting that a separation was imminent, the most important being obstructions in the communicating passage

between the apartments of the emperor and empress. This part of the palace was in the hands of workmen for repairs when Napoleon's unexpected arrival took place. Furniture had been piled in the passage—perhaps by accident. Josephine commented on the occurrence to Bausset, who did his best to reassure her. "Three days after our arrival at Fontainebleau," he wrote, "I observed some clouds of sadness upon the brow of Josephine and much less freedom in Napoleon's manner towards her." After asking him why the private passage had been closed she said to him, "M. de Bausset, believe me, there is some hidden mystery."

Meanwhile the emperor hoped to make the unfortunate woman understand the sacrifice he demanded of her without entering into a full explanation. He dreaded her tears and reproaches. Fearing to excite an outburst of feeling, he hesitated before telling her his irrevocable decision.

At length on the last day of November he called her into his study. His face was stern and set as he gave her to understand how matters stood. Josephine burst into tears and almost fainted. Napoleon called Bausset, who helped him to bear her to her own apartments. For three hours she lay unconscious, with only Hortense, who was then at Fontainebleau, beside her. Bausset places the account of the fainting at the

Tuileries, where the formal act in the drama which deprived Josephine of her wifedom without divesting her of the dignity of being an empress took place. Josephine's account related in Bourrienne's Memoirs, if not strictly reliable, is interesting. Bourrienne went to see her at Malmaison about a year after the divorce was an accomplished thing. He was ushered into a small drawing-room, draped like a tent, where he found Josephine and Hortense. Presently the latter was called away and he was left alone with the empress, who repeated much that he had already heard from Duroc regarding what had taken place at Fontainebleau, Napoleon's coldness, the separation of their apartments, and so forth. "On the 30th of November," she continued, telling her sad story, "we were dining together as usual, and during that sorrowful repast I had not uttered a word, and he had only broken the silence to ask one of the servants what time it was. As soon as Bonaparte had taken his coffee he dismissed all his attendants, and I remained alone with him. I saw in the expression of his countenance what was passing in his mind, and I knew that my hour was come. Coming close to me he took my hand, pressed it to his heart, and, after gazing at me for a few moments in silence, he uttered these fatal words, 'Josephine, my dear Josephine! You know I have loved you: to you alone do I owe the only moments of happiness I have tasted in this world.

But, Josephine, my destiny is superior to my will ; my dearest affections must give way to the interests of France.' 'Say no more !' I exclaimed ; 'I understand you ; I expected this, but the blow is not the less severe.' I had not power to say more," continued Josephine ; "I know not what took place after ; strength and reason at once forsook me, and when I recovered I found myself in my chamber. Your friend Corvisart and my poor daughter were with me. Bonaparte came to see me in the evening, and oh, Bourrienne, how can I give you an idea of what I then felt ! Even the interest he appeared to feel for my situation seemed an additional cruelty. Alas ! I had good reason to fear ever becoming an empress."

Her worst prognostications were fulfilled. The divorce over, Josephine retired to Malmaison, her beautiful and favourite home. The Château of Navarre was also her property, and in Paris she was privileged to reside at the Elysée Palace.

Preparations for Napoleon's marriage with the Archduchess Marie-Louise went on apace. One ceremony took place at Vienna by proxy, another at Notre Dame on April 2, 1810. It was not long before the young bride took up her residence at Fontainebleau in the queen's apartments during the yearly visit of the Court to the palace. She spent many a happy hour with an indulgent husband, who regarded her as the type of innocence and nature. Her most striking qualities

were youth and freshness. Her face was gentle in expression, her eyes very blue and animated, her hair a light yellow, her lips full and red, her hands and feet were models of beauty. To please her Napoleon planted pine-trees in the Jardin Anglais to replace in her affections the forests of Austria and the Tyrol. The spot in the palace grounds most connected with her memory is the small pavilion in the centre of the carp-pond, originally built by Henri IV, and restored by Napoleon in 1811. Here the emperor and empress sometimes drank their afternoon coffee together. Their happiness appeared to have been crowned by the birth of their son, the King of Rome, on March 20 of that year. Thus was Josephine's sacrifice accepted by the gods. A few short years, however, were to show that it had not benefited the man who had demanded it.

Meanwhile the palace of Fontainebleau was to be seen under a new aspect—as a prison. In 1809 Napoleon, having suppressed the temporal power, sent the Pope to Savona, where he endeavoured to obtain from him a solemn and voluntary renunciation of his rights. The inflexible determination of Pius VII to resist this demand occasioned the emperor no little anxiety. Savona was not sufficiently secure to guard so important a prisoner. After much deliberation and delay it was decided to remove the captured pontiff hurriedly to Fontainebleau, where he arrived on

June 19, 1812. Eight years after his first visit to the palace Pius VII mounted the grand staircase, where in 1804 he had been received in state by courtiers, ministers, high officials and generals. He was now feeble and weary, almost dying. He leant on the arm of his doctor, without honours, without escort other than a few servants sent thither in haste to receive him. The apartments previously occupied by him were once more at his disposal. The suite consisted of an ante-chamber hung with tapestry, a small bedroom, a *salon*, the bedroom of the queen-mother, in which were portraits of Anne of Austria and Marie-Thérèse, a modest study in which his portrait now hangs, the room used as his own sleeping apartment, two more reception rooms and another ante-chamber. For eighteen months, until January 24, 1814, Pius VII occupied the position of prisoner in this narrow cage. Here he said Mass, at a small square altar of painted wood specially placed for the purpose in Anne of Austria's bedchamber. Here, too, he found calmness in faith and devotion, keeping in mind during these weary months the motto, "Courage and Prayer." According to the account given in Napoleon's Memoirs, "he had always about him seven or eight French bishops to do the honours of the palace; several cardinals, amongst whom were Doria and Ruffo, his medical and ecclesiastical establishments, his almoner, chaplain, etc. He regulated his expenses at his own discretion. A

great number of carriages belonging to the Court were at his command; the guards waited on him for the password every morning, and the Grand-Marshal Duroc superintended the supply of everything necessary for him and his Court with the greatest attention."

Pius VII had but few wants. The sparse living of a monastery would have sufficed him. His only amusement was to sit by the window and gaze upon the lake and gardens, with the picturesque vision of the forest in the background. But he believed and hoped that the end of a lamentable disagreement might be settled in his favour, and he awaited in patience the hour when justice should be done.

Thus proceeded the long struggle between Empire and Mother-Church.

Napoleon, returning from a disastrous campaign in Russia, wrote to Pius VII a non-committal letter concerning himself with the prisoner's health, and explaining that the solution of the difficulty rested entirely in his own hands. The Pope sent a messenger with his reply, and the dilatory and fruitless negotiations continued. His Holiness was becoming very weary, and suspense was telling seriously upon his health. Napoleon, believing his victim was growing too exhausted to hold out longer against his wishes, arranged for a personal interview. On January. 19, 1813, he ordered there to be hunting in the woods of Melun. From thence, at midday, he jumped into a coach, and was driven to Fon-

tainebleau. Marie-Louise had been commanded to the palace. When the Pope saw her he looked at her sadly, for, alas ! she was not the empress he had consecrated.

Napoleon, making his way immediately to the pontifical apartments, entered the *salon* unexpectedly, and found Pius VII busy with several bishops and cardinals. The old man was agitated by this sudden intrusion of the enemy he longed yet feared to meet. Pope and emperor had not met since the latter's coronation. Napoleon embraced him in kindly fashion, saluting him in the name of "Father." His Holiness, touched by this show of affection, called Napoleon "Son." For five long days discussions of the gravest import continued almost without break. At length the text of a treaty was agreed upon, and drawn up in French and Italian. On January 25 the Pope and the emperor signed the act by which the temporal power of the papacy was annihilated, and the cardinals, who had been detained during the negotiations, and were known as the black cardinals, were released. All appeared to be going smoothly ; but when his advisers were once more around him Pius VII fell into deep despondency and agitation. Napoleon, after leaving Fontainebleau, published in the official journals the fact that the differences between himself and the Pope were settled by a Concordat.

Cardinal Pacca, arriving at the palace on Feb-

ruary 18, found the courtyard and terraces deserted. All the doors and windows were closed. A sentinel was on guard at the top of the horseshoe staircase. Pacca was requested to hasten to the Pope without waiting to change his travelling-dress. Pius VII received him, greatly troubled. He was deathly pale, his eyes deep-sunk, his cheeks fallen in. He seemed utterly dazed. The Cardinal hastened to assure him that he had only admiration for the heroic courage with which he had endured his long and trying captivity. "Nevertheless," broke in the Holy Father, interrupting the praise, "we finished by rolling in the mire. . . . The cardinals dragged me to that small table and made me sign."

It is significant to note that only two years later, in a room close by, on a similar table, Napoleon was forced to sign his abdication.

Overcome by the Pope's remorse, Pacca set to work, in conjunction with Cardinal Consalvi and others, to deliberate what was to be done. It was at last decided that Pius VII should write to the emperor repudiating the Concordat. The letter, dated at Fontainebleau, March 24, 1813, contains the striking passage, "We recognize that the deed was badly done; we confess it to have been badly done, and with the help of God we demand that it should be undone, in order that no harm may result to the Church and no prejudice be upon us." Pacca reported that Napoleon, upon receipt of this epistle, declared angrily, "If I do not sever the

head from the trunk of some of these priests at Fontainebleau, things will never be settled." In the meantime the affairs of the empire were engaging Napoleon's attention to the exclusion of all else. His power was being threatened on every hand. All he could do was to dispatch Cardinal Maury to the palace to treat with the Pope, who received him coldly. For months there was indecisive fencing, thrust and parry. Cardinal di Pietro, who had played a large part in influencing the Pope against Napoleon, was exiled; Pacca and Consalvi were threatened with a similar fate, and the Concordat of Fontainebleau was proclaimed law. Napoleon had no time to devise fresh means of bringing Pius VII to reason. The captivity of the aged Pontiff was giving rise to strong public disapproval, and it was finally thought well to free him. On January 23, 1814, the Pope, having blessed all the faithful, who surrounded him to bid him good-bye, descended the grand staircase and mounted in the carriage which awaited him in the courtyard of the palace. He arrived at Savona towards the end of February. On January 26 sixteen cardinals who still remained at Fontainebleau were commanded to quit the palace within four days, without an escort.

A few weeks later Napoleon retired to Fontainebleau in a far worse state than had fallen to the lot of his holy captive. The latter had been a martyr to his faith, the former was a martyr to his ambition.

On March 31, 1814, the Emperor of Russia and the King of Prussia entered Paris. Napoleon wished to make an attempt upon the capital, but in this he was overruled, and it was decided that he should settle temporarily at Fontainebleau, where he could endeavour to concentrate his army and prepare for a final struggle. On April 4 he reviewed the guards that were leaving Fontainebleau in order to station themselves behind Marmont and Mortier on the Essonne. He ordered the officers and sub-officers to form a circle round him, and harangued them, "Soldiers, the enemy, in stealing three marches on us, have rendered themselves masters of Paris. They must be expelled. Frenchmen, unworthy of the name, . . . have made common cause with the foreigners and mounted the white cockade. . . . Let us swear to conquer or die, to avenge the insult offered to our country and our arms."¹

"We swear it," cried the officers, all on fire with devotion to their standard, whilst the troops defiled, uttering fierce acclamations.

Napoleon mounted the horseshoe staircase, followed by his officers, some still full of wild enthusiasm, others cooling somewhat and beginning to murmur at the risk of the proposed attack on Paris. A meeting of the marshals then took place in Napoleon's cabinet. Napoleon, having thrown aside his hat and sword, was pacing up and down

¹ Thiers, *History of the Consulate and the Empire of France*.

the apartment, speaking in vehement tones, urging them to make one last effort to save France and avenge his honour. But his soldiers, thinking of the risk of turning Paris into a scene of carnage, begged Marshal Macdonald, who had just arrived at the palace, to reason with the emperor. Bourrienne heard of the interview from the marshal himself. "The moment he entered the emperor's apartment the latter stepped up to him and said, 'Well, how are things going on?' 'Very badly, sire.' 'How? badly! What, then, are the feelings of your army?' 'My army, sire, is entirely discouraged—their minds are alarmed by the events of Paris.'" Napoleon spoke of his plans, to which Macdonald, not wishing to discourage the emperor too forcibly, listened in silence. Then he handed to him a letter from Marshal Beurnonville, which was read aloud. It showed Napoleon the futility of his hopes. "Sire," exclaimed Macdonald, refusing to beat about the bush any longer, "your project must be renounced. Not a sword would be drawn from its scabbard to second you in such an enterprise."

There was no alternative. It became necessary for the emperor to sign his abdication.

"The allied powers," he wrote, "having declared that the Emperor Napoleon was the only obstacle to the re-establishment of peace in Europe, the Emperor Napoleon, faithful to his oath, declares he is ready to descend from the throne, to

quit France, or even life, for the welfare of his country, inseparable from the rights of his son, from those of the regency of the empress, and the laws of the empire. Given at our palace of Fontainebleau, 4th April, 1814."

On the following day Napoleon inspected his troops in the palace yard. So apparent was the coolness amongst his soldiers that he retired to his apartments discouraged. Once more the fighting instinct burst forth. "Come," he cried to his generals, "let us march to the Alps." There was no reply. "Ah," continued Napoleon, "you demand repose. Have it, then. Alas, you cannot know how many disappointments and dangers await you on your beds of down."

It was April 6. Ney, Macdonald and Caulaincourt had returned to Fontainebleau with the news that the allies required the emperor's unconditional abdication, with no other stipulation than the guarantee of his personal safety. "When Macdonald entered the emperor's chamber he found him seated in a small arm-chair before the fire-place," wrote Bourrienne. "He was dressed in a morning-gown of white dimity, and he wore his slippers without stockings. His elbows rested on his knees, and his head was supported by his hands. He was motionless, and appeared absorbed in profound reflection. Before the close of the interview he had signed the formal abdication on the small table which is preserved at

the palace in the Cabinet de l'Abdication, near the chamber in which the Imperial bee appears as the emblem of the power thus shattered.

"The allied Powers having declared that the emperor was the sole obstacle to the re-establishment of peace in Europe, the emperor, faithful to his oaths, declares that he renounces for himself and his heirs the thrones of France and Italy, and that there is no sacrifice, not even that of life, which he is not ready to make for the interest of France."

Unhinged by maddening thoughts, on April 11 Napoleon attempted to poison himself. Whilst awaiting the effects of the fatal dose he sent for Caulaincourt, to whom he expressed his last wishes. It was then three o'clock in the morning. His features were scarcely recognizable in the dim light, his voice was weak and changed in tone. Caulaincourt, observing a half-empty glass by the bedside, grew suspicious and taxed Napoleon with having endeavoured to end his life. He tried to escape and call for assistance. Owing to Napoleon's strong constitution the poison failed to kill; after terrible agony and hours of lethargy he revived somewhat.

"Providence has decreed it," he remarked to Caulaincourt. "I will live—who can penetrate the future?"

The Duchesse d'Abrantes relates the scene somewhat differently. "When the Duke of

Bassano perceived him, in a condition closely resembling death, he knelt down at his bedside and burst into tears. 'Ah, Sire !' he exclaimed ; ' what have you done ? ' The emperor raised his eyes and looked at the duke with an expression of affection ; then, stretching to him his cold, damp hand, he said, ' You see, God has decreed that I shall not die, He, too, condemns me to suffer ! ' "

Napoleon then prepared for the inevitable journey to Elba.

Meanwhile Josephine, in deadly anxiety, heard nothing of the fate of the man she still loved better than life. All the routes leading from Paris, from Fontainebleau, from Blois were in possession of the allies ; all information was intercepted. Josephine at Navarre knew nothing, save that Marie-Louise had fled with her son. After a terrible interval of silence at length a courier was announced from Fontainebleau.

When she was told of the abdication and of the decree of banishment, she cried, " Ah, unhappy Napoleon ; exiled to Elba ! If it were not for his wife I should demand to go with him. "

Napoleon apparently grew resigned to the fate in store for him. He was ready to leave the palace. Each day he saw solitude coming nearer him. Ney and Macdonald had left. Oudinot, Lefebvre and Moncey retired each in his own fashion. Berthier went also, but Berthier had

promised to return ; Napoleon expected him ! Instead of the arrival of Berthier each succeeding day witnessed the departure of some officer of high rank. " One left Fontainebleau on account of his health, another for family reasons, or for business—all promised to return soon, but not one kept his word. Napoleon feigned to enter into the motives of each, pressed affectionately the hands of all at parting, for he knew that he was receiving their last adieus, and listened, without believing, when they promised to return quickly. Gradually the palace of Fontainebleau had become empty. In the deserted courts the noise of carriage wheels was still sometimes heard, but after a little attention the ear discovered that these were departing vehicles. Napoleon seemed amid these scenes as if assisting at his own funeral."¹ . . . But there were a few whom nothing had been able to shake. Drouot remained with his unfortunate master, as well as Caulaincourt and Bassano. At length, on April 20, Napoleon was about to leave Fontainebleau. At ten o'clock the carriages were in readiness and the Imperial guard was drawn up in the Cour du Cheval Blanc. The people of the town had thronged to the palace. All the forms of Imperial etiquette were observed to the end. Napoleon came down the horseshoe staircase and at twelve precisely he stood at the head of the guard as though a review was about to take place. The

¹ Thiers, *History of the Consulate and the Empire of France*.

scene was most affecting ; his speech rang out in his usually firm and sonorous voice.

“Soldiers of my old guard, I bid you farewell. For twenty years I have constantly accompanied you on the road to honour and glory. In these latter times, as in the days of our prosperity, you have invariably been models of courage and fidelity. With men such as you our cause could not have been lost, but the war would have been interminable ; it would have been civil war, and that would have entailed deeper misfortunes on France. I have sacrificed all my interests to those of the country. I go ; but you, my friends, will continue to serve France. . . . Adieu, my friends ! Would I could press you all to my heart !”¹ Then ordering the eagles to be brought he embraced General Petit and kissed the war-stained banner, adding to the men, “I embrace you all in the person of your general. Adieu, mes enfants, adieu.”

With stirring words such as these Napoleon sprang into the carriage which was waiting to take him into exile. It was April 21, and he left Fontainebleau without a line to Josephine. When he returned there after his escape from Elba in March 1815 she knew nothing of the torment still in store for him. She had breathed her last on May 26, 1814. — 118

¹ Bourrienne, *Mémoires de Napoléon*.

Handwritten signature: Bourrienne

HELENA OF MECKLENBURG
(THE BRIDE OF FONTAINEBLEAU)



CHAPTER XIV

HELENA OF MECKLENBURG

(THE BRIDE OF FONTAINEBLEAU)

WITH the departure of Napoleon from the palace courtyard, called thereafter the Cour des Adieux, the story of Fontainebleau loses some of its dramatic force. Napoleon's exit was tragic, and the note of tragedy never rang for long at Fontainebleau. Gaiety and festivity are the qualities for which the palace gained a reputation in early centuries, and gaiety and festivity are the qualities which sustain that reputation to the end.

A year after Napoleon's final disappearance Fontainebleau was once more in gala mood. Louis XVIII and his Court were expecting the arrival of Princess Caroline, who was coming from Naples, where she had married the Duc de Berry by proxy on April 24, 1816. No shadow of her future chequered career was cast upon the brilliant reception of the young Duchesse de Berry ; at that moment the happiness of her future seemed assured. "She pleased me at first and continued to please me better the more I knew of her," wrote the Comtesse d'Agoult. "She was not pretty according

to regular standards ; her features offered nothing remarkable to look at ; her gaze was indirect, her lips too full and nearly always open ; she held herself badly, and even those who were well disposed towards her could not truthfully say that she possessed the grand manner. But this blonde Neapolitan had her own charm, a marvellous splendour of colouring, silky fair hair, the loveliest arms in the world, and feet which, in spite of being pigeon-toed, were nice to look at, so small and well made were they.”¹ Others were not so lenient in their description of her personal appearance. Maréchal de Castellane, Colonel of the Fifth Hussars, described his first meeting with her in his Journal. “A squadron of my regiment,” he wrote, “was sent on June 15 to Montargis, under the orders of Lieutenant-Colonel de Mersemann, and broken up into small detachments in order to escort the Duchesse de Berry to Nemours, where I had a division commanded by Captain Turckheim. I went there with several officers. The Duc d’Havre introduced me to the princess. Her ugliness astonished me. She had a cast in her right eye, which in an ordinary woman would have been called a squint. She was fair, slender, her figure small but well made. I escorted her with my hussars, and I had time on the way to assure myself of her want of beauty. She had a hideous mouth, which, however, did not deter the courtier

¹ Mme. d’Agoult, *Mes Souvenirs*.

Girardin running about among the various groups of people assembled and crying unceasingly, 'How charming she is, Mme. la Duchesse de Berry !' "¹

Fortunately the Duc de Berry was not ill-pleased with his bride. The meeting took place at the Croix de Saint-Hérem, where two large tents had been erected, one for the royal family, the other for Princess Caroline and her suite.

It was arranged that the carriages of the king and the bride should arrive at the chosen spot at the same moment from opposite directions, and, to ensure this arrangement, signals had been provided on both roads in order to regulate the speed of the respective carriages and enable them to dash up simultaneously, as prescribed by the ceremonial. A carpet had been spread on the grass, and the princess had to cross this on foot as far as the centre, where she was met by the king. Caroline was wearing a diadem of fine pearls in her hair, surmounted by a wreath of roses. The sun was shining, and the uniforms of the soldiers, the gay dresses and coloured plumes worn by the ladies made a bright patch of colour against the dark green of the forest. The lively young bride bounded forward in her excitement to greet the king.

"We followed our princess," wrote the Maréchale Oudinot, Duchesse de Reggio, who was lady-of-honour to Caroline. "The king, who had

¹ Maréchal de Castellane, *Journal*, vol i.

alighted on his side, stretched out his arms in order to prevent her from kneeling to him, as was also prescribed by the order of ceremonies. Without waiting to read the letters from the King of Naples presented to him by the princess, the king re-entered with her the royal chariot, which was all of glass and of a dimension to carry the whole family. We followed in our own carriage and in this way made our entry into Fontainebleau.

"In spite of the frigid solemnity of the etiquette followed on this occasion, there was a certain display of sentiment, and M. le Duc de Berry had seized an opportunity to say to Mme. de la Ferronays and myself, 'Ah, you bring me some one incomparably more attractive than I had imagined.' He seemed delivered from a nightmare, and in his joy he thanked us as though we had moulded the young arrival with our own hands."

Dinner was served in the Galerie de Henri II, and sixty people were present at the royal table. During the repast the band played "*Charmante Gabrielle*." Afterwards the king led the princess to the window to be presented to the people.

"There was a solemn dinner, followed by a solemn evening," continued the Duchesse de Reggio. "A game of *loto-dauphin*, over which the king presided, formed part of the programme, and I found it a very imposing task, I can assure you, to have to call out the numbers in my turn, amid profound silence. When I had finished

this duty, I thought that was all ; but the king, looking me straight in the face, asked—

“ ‘ Have you finished, Mme. la Duchesse ? ’

“ ‘ Yes, sire ; the blanks are all filled.’

“ ‘ But at the last number you ought to say “ et tel chiffre,” which explains to all of us that you have finished calling out the numbers.’

“ I remembered it for the future.

“ We retired early, and the next morning we drove to Paris, where an official entry was made.”¹

The marriage ceremony was celebrated at Notre Dame.

The Court often paid a visit to Fontainebleau in the autumn, but beyond completing the Galerie de Diane, which had been partially restored by Napoleon, and renovating the Galerie des Cerfs, Louis XVIII took little practical interest in the palace. His brother, Charles X, left still fewer traces of his visits to Fontainebleau, but Louis-Philippe contributed largely to the adornment of the palace by restoring many of the paintings, and carrying out certain works which were not always in the best of taste.

In 1833 Louis-Philippe, accompanied by the royal family—the king did not permit the use of the word “ Court ”—visited Fontainebleau for the first time.

The two princesses of Savoy, wives respectively

¹ *Memoirs of Marshal Oudinot, Duc de Reggio, from Souvenirs of the Duchesse de Reggio.*

of Louis XVIII and Charles X, having died before their husbands succeeded to the throne, Marie-Amélie, wife of Louis-Philippe, was the first queen at Fontainebleau after the Restoration. She did the honours of the palace with the accustomed grace, which had won from Talleyrand the praise "that she was the last *grande dame* who existed in Europe." The visit in 1833 lasted only for four days. On September 22 a reception was held, and a procession of young girls from the village was organized for the purpose of presenting flowers and declaiming verses to the queen.

During the succeeding three or four years Louis-Philippe carried out a number of improvements at the palace. The Galerie de Henri II had shown many signs of decay, the floor was worn, the frescoes faded, the gilding tarnished. He commanded Alaux and other artists to renovate the work of Primaticcio and Nicole Abbate, and below the gallery he constructed the Salle des Colonnes, an ugly gallery containing twenty-four columns and sometimes called the Salle Louis-Philippe or Salle-à-manger. Moreover, he restored the Porte Dorée to its pristine glory and colour, the Salle des Gardes, with its vivid paintings, arabesques, scrolls, medallions, emblems and monograms of Henri IV, Louis XIII, Anne of Austria and Jeanne d'Albret, the king's staircase, the Salon François I, the Salle de Saint-Louis, to which he removed the equestrian statue of Henri IV, and he rearranged

the apartments of Mme. de Maintenon, the rooms round the Cour des Princes, where the favourites had been lodged, as well as the bedchamber of Pius VII, which was hung with silk and formed the nuptial-chamber of his son, the Duc d'Orléans and the latter's fair bride, Helena of Mecklenburg. A great part of this restoration, indeed, was accomplished on account of the approaching marriage of the Duc d'Orléans. The king's new daughter-in-law was gifted, as he knew, with an appreciation of art, of beauty and of culture. He desired that this, the most interesting of the palaces, should appear at its best, in full and picturesque glory, to welcome one of the most charming women who had ever been seen within its walls. Louis-Philippe rejoiced in being able to display for her benefit the marvels of restoration which were his work.

With the wedding of Helena of Mecklenburg the romance of Fontainebleau comes to a fitting close. Marriage bells form the traditionally happy ending to its story. Under the Second Republic no important event took place there; during the Second Empire a modern spirit crept in which harmonized ill with the courtly graces of earlier days. The palace gates were thrown wide for the last time in a spontaneous burst of hospitable elegance and splendour which reflected the glories of past ages to receive the charming princess who had journeyed from the castle of Ludwigslust to become the bride of the heir to the throne of France.

Helena Louisa Elizabeth of Mecklenburg-Schwerin was the daughter of Louis Frederick, Hereditary Duke of Mecklenburg-Schwerin and his wife Caroline Louisa, daughter of the Grand-Duke Charles Augustus of Saxe-Weimar. She was born on January 24, 1814, and her mother died before her second birthday. Helena was brought up by her mother's second cousin, Princess Augusta of Hesse-Homburg. When she was thirteen years old she was taken to the Court of Weimar for the first time in her life. She was "clad all in rose colour, without any ornament in her fair brown hair, light as a bird, yet full of nobility in every movement." Later, when she had reached the bloom of womanhood, she was said to combine the figure of a queen with the grace of a child.

In the spring of 1836 the Duc d'Orléans, accompanied by his brother, the Duc de Nemours, travelled to Berlin in search of a bride. He was fastidious in his tastes and difficult to please. If his future wife was not French at least he demanded that she should be as well informed concerning his country as though she had been educated in it. Besides her royal birth, she must be virtuous, beautiful, intellectual, broad-minded, and sweet-tempered. Fortunately Helena of Mecklenburg possessed all these attributes and a good many others, which made her a very desirable partner in life. At first difficulties were raised in connection with the proposed marriage, but these were

finally overcome and the contract was signed on April 5, 1837. On May 15 following Helena left the castle of Ludwigslust, where she had been born, to make her long journey to Fontainebleau. The marriage was to take place on the 30th of the month.

The king and his household had arrived at the palace on the 27th at eight o'clock. The village was gaily decorated, tricolour flags hanging from all the windows. The following day Louis-Philippe reviewed the national guard and troops of the line which were in camp at Fontainebleau.

In the evening dinner was served to one hundred and fifty people in the Galerie de Diane. After the meal was over the king took his guests into the Galerie de Henri II in order that they might admire a new system of lighting up the gallery.

On the evening of the 29th Helena arrived at the palace in a gilt state coach drawn by eight horses. The Duc d'Orléans had met her at Chalons-sur-Marne and accompanied her to the palace. At Melun she had been met by a group of young maidens dressed in white, who offered her the usual kind of compliment, a presentation of flowers and a poetical address, composed in this case by Clovis Michaux.

The Cour des Adieux was lined with artillery, cavalry and infantry awaiting the arrival of the princess, an enormous crowd of people being

present to witness the approach of one in whose fair hands lay the possibility of happiness closely affecting, as it was thought, the future welfare of the country.

Undoubtedly the bride had recognized that her position would be beset by difficulties which, as far as in her power lay, she was determined to overcome.

"I was invited to Fontainebleau, where the nuptials were to be celebrated," wrote Guizot of this occasion. "I arrived there on the 29th of May. The Court was brilliant, and the public satisfied. The future, they said, was secure. It was well known that other alliances had been attempted without success; a good feeling was entertained towards the young princess for her confidence in the destiny, perhaps a stormy one, which opened before her. It was related that before leaving Schwerin she replied to the expressed uneasiness of her family, 'I had rather be Duchess of Orleans for a single year than pass my life in looking from these windows to see who enters the court of the castle.' "

Helena left her carriage at the foot of the grand staircase. She was accompanied by the dowager Duchess of Mecklenburg-Schwerin, by the Duc de Broglie and the Baron de Rantzau. She was dressed all in pink, and wore a hat with large white plumes. Drums were beaten, trumpets sounded, and the soldiers presented arms. The

king, who was standing ready to receive his future daughter-in-law, embraced her before she could bend low enough to carry his hand to her lips. Then he led her to the queen. Helena was about to kneel at the feet of Marie-Amélie, but this the latter would not permit, taking her into her arms instead with an affectionate murmur of "My daughter, my dear daughter." Mme. Adélaïde, the Queen of the Belgians, Princess Marie and Princess Clementine also embraced the bride, who shook hands with her brother-in-law elect. Of this affecting greeting, Talleyrand remarked to his neighbour, "If you ever wish to describe this scene ask the king to speak of his silence, the queen of her tears, the princess of the inmost thoughts of her heart; for it is only through a knowledge of these things that you would find it possible to paint it truly."

The royal party mounted the horseshoe staircase followed by *aides-de-camp*, officers of the household and the ladies-in-waiting.

The first act in the ceremonial proceedings was over.

"I know no palace to be compared to Fontainebleau for great solemnities," wrote Guizot; "it stamps upon them a kind of splendour from the very first moment. So many kings and so many ages have laid their impress and left their traces upon the walls that when history is being made there it is in the presence of all the records of the

past, and present events link themselves with old events as though with their own ancestors. From the first narrow winding staircase, which in the most ancient of the buildings led to the small chamber of Louis le Jeune, to the grand apartments constructed or restored in recent days, we traverse the abodes of François I, Henri II, Henri IV, Louis XIII, Louis XIV, Louis XV, Napoleon, Louis XVIII, and Louis-Philippe. We assist them in their labours, we contemplate their magnificence."

M. Jules Janin has given the most complete account of the festivities which took place in 1837 at the marriage of the Duc d'Orléans from the point of view of an eye-witness. Whilst waiting for the arrival of the princess one of his friends asked M. Janin whether he had seen the bride's trousseau. On receiving a reply in the negative this gentleman remarked that he personally had been far more fortunate. "I saw it all," he declared, "quite at my ease, for I was in the fine apartments of the prince royal all by myself, and if the king had not happened to come in and interrupt me I think I should still be there, lost in admiration. Imagine my blushes," he continued, "when after traversing the vast apartments of the Duc d'Orléans, of which the severe hangings nevertheless recalled all the elegance of the time of Louis XIII, I found myself in the two rooms where the trousseau of the young duchess was on

view. The wedding gift was placed on a raised dais. This gift was a chest of tortoise shell and gilded bronze, of marvellous workmanship, incrustated with silver. The sixteenth century would not disown such a masterpiece. The dais was hung with draperies, lace, wreaths of flowers, and the floating gauze so dear to young women, and which a poet has described as woven air. The linen was heaped up on one side, a mountain of embroidery and lace. Gowns without number lay on trunks; and Algerian scarves, and hats with waving plumes. A dozen cashmere shawls occupied an insignificant place in this conjugal display. There was one of soft green embroidered with golden palms, for which all the ladies in Europe would have gladly sold their souls; it was sent by the Queen of England. Judge, if you please, of that hand and of that foot by the gloves and shoes, gloves and shoes suitable for a child no more than fifteen years old. They were fashioned for the hand and for the foot of the princess. The velvets, the satins, the ribbons, all those infinite details which are the outward and visible signs of a royal passion, were not wanting; but it was necessary to be a woman, a young and beautiful woman, a dispassionate woman, a woman of Paris, to understand all and to see all.

“Have I spoken of the lace wedding-gown, of the pocket handkerchiefs embroidered and trimmed with Valenciennes lace of a hand’s breadth, of

African turbans, and of muffs made of feathers, and of veils on which shone the monograms of the bride and bridegroom, F. P., H. O. : Ferdinand Philippe, Hélène d'Orléans, surmounted by a crown ? ”

Besides these elegant trifles there were heaps of pearls, rubies, diamonds, sets of precious stones, rings, painted fans, vases of gold, bouquet-holders, and other presents. The fans alone were marvels of art and skill. Three were designed by the great painter Roqueplan to represent “*Le Mariage de la Vierge*,” “*Les Amours peintres*,” and “*La Promenade au Parc*.” Two fans were by Clément Boulanger, “*Les Noces de Cana*,” and “*Le Repos de Chasse*.” The handles of the fans were gold and ivory beautifully carved.

Every gift that could delight the heart of a princess was hers to command.

On the evening of Helena's arrival dinner was partaken of in the *Galerie de Diane* at nine o'clock, between two hundred and two hundred and fifty people being present. The subject of conversation which occupied the company was the grace and beauty, the charming manners and perfect tact of the bride. Her accomplishments, too, were freely discussed. She had studied music, painting, and all the arts. She spoke four languages with perfect ease. And whilst she sat at table between the king and her future husband, smiling at the assembled guests, every eye was turned to hers,

every heart was won by her friendliness and modesty. It was a triumph, indeed, this arrival of a foreign princess, who in so short a while had secured her acceptance in their midst ; who from being at first but a nation's hope was become ere a few hours had passed a nation's pride. "Before seeing her," wrote Janin, "one relied upon the word of others to believe that she was beautiful, but one had scarcely glanced at her before one was convinced that in reality her beauty was divine." She had a lithe and supple figure, small hands and feet, fair hair, a fresh complexion, a very white neck, a resonant voice, and blue eyes full of intelligence and fire.

On the morning of the 30th the guests amused themselves by wandering in the forest. The three marriage ceremonies were timed for the evening of that day. At seven o'clock the palace was already lit up, each door, each casement shining with unaccustomed brilliancy. "To see these vast galleries illuminated little by little," wrote Janin, "one would have said that all the ages which had loved, had prayed, had suffered, which had died within these walls, were stepping one by one out of oblivion and returning in their most gorgeous attire and ceremonial pomp to spend but one more *fête* in glory, pleasure and passion. Certes, on this evening at least it was not necessary to be a great poet in order to bring back life to the old history long since extinct."

At half-past eight Louis-Philippe entered the Galerie de Henri II with the bride leaning on his arm, followed by all the princes, the queen and princesses and their suites. A round table stood in front of the large chimney-piece, on which was laid the register of State. The Duc d'Orléans and his bride were in the centre opposite Baron Pasquier, the Chancellor. Louis-Philippe and Marie-Amélie stood beside the bridegroom, the dowager Grand-Duchess of Mecklenburg-Schwerin beside the bride. Round about were ministers, marshals, nobles, deputies, heads of the municipality, generals, and many guests. Behind the bridal couple stood the king and queen of the Belgians, the Duc de Nemours, the Prince de Joinville, the Duc d'Aumale, the Duc de Montpensier, Princess Clementine, Princess Marie and Mme. Adélaïde, and a group of witnesses.

The contract was read and signed. Then a procession was formed which passed out of the Galerie de Henri II, through the Salle des Gardes and the Galerie de François I to the Chapelle de la Sainte-Trinité, where the marriage was celebrated according to Catholic rites by Monseigneur Gallard, Bishop of Meaux, assisted by the Bishop of Maroc, the queen's almoner. From thence the wedding-party proceeded to the Salle de Louis-Philippe, where a Protestant ceremony was performed. An altar had been specially placed for the purpose in this gallery, hung simply with

red velvet, without other ornament except a crucifix and four lighted candles. The bride and bridegroom knelt on a red carpet, whilst M. Cuvier, the head of the Reformed Church, gave an address. By the time the third ceremony was over it was eleven o'clock, and the royal family dispersed to their various apartments. Louis-Philippe occupied the rooms of Napoleon I, Marie-Amélie those of Marie-Antoinette and Marie-Louise. To the newly wedded couple were apportioned the suite which had belonged to the Pope.

The royal household remained at Fontainebleau until June 4, enjoying every kind of festivity—concerts, reviews, theatrical representations, receptions, and fireworks in the parterre, at which the monogram F. H., Ferdinand and Helena, was represented in letters of fire.

On May 31 there was a grand promenade through the forest. Louis-Philippe, Marie-Amélie, the king and queen of the Belgians, the Duc and Duchesse d'Orléans, the dowager Grand-Duchess of Mecklenburg-Schwerin, Mme. Adélaïde, the princesses Marie and Clementine were in open carriages. The Duc de Nemours, the Prince de Joinville, and the Duc d'Aumale were on horseback. In the rear were eighteen carriages filled with guests, and a crowd of cavaliers. The procession made towards the Gorges d'Apremont, one of the more savage and secluded spots of the forest.

In the evening a play was performed at the theatre. The royal box was in the centre, the guests were placed to the right and left of it. Mlle. Mars was acting, and was received with ovation. The pieces produced were *Les Fausses Confidences* and *La Gageure Imprevue*.

On the evening of June 1 *William Tell* and *Le Diable Boiteux* were represented at the theatre.

On the following day the royal family visited the camp at the edge of the forest. The soldiers had ingeniously executed models of ramparts, citadels, pyramids and parterres, ornamented with monograms and emblems picked out in various coloured flowers. They had traced the name of their new princess, and Helena, moved by this mark of devotion, detached one of the flowers, which she preserved as a souvenir. Fifty Alsatian soldiers sang a chorus in German, and the king thanked them in that language. After spending an hour in the camp the royal family departed, returning to the palace in carriages. In the evening the artistes of the Opéra Comique gave performances of *L'Eclair* and *Le Calife de Bagdad*.

By June 3 some of the guests had taken their departure. Only one hundred covers were laid at the dinner-table. The festivities ended that evening in a representation of *Michel et Christine* and *Le Menteur Veridique*. The entertainments had lasted a week. As Talleyrand left the palace he remarked, "I have assisted at

many splendid *fêtes*, I have lived in the royal households of all Europe, but I have never been present at festivities which were so magnificently conducted, in such good order, with such exquisite taste, for so large a number of people, and during such a lengthy period."

On June 4 the king and the royal family left Fontainebleau for Paris. The palace lay silent once more, "breathing distinction and peopled by historic names," but deserted now by the fair women who were its greatest charm.

The peal of wedding bells ceased to reverberate, the royal procession passed, the scenes of pageantry vanished. Fontainebleau knows them no more, but lives on in the records of the days gone by.

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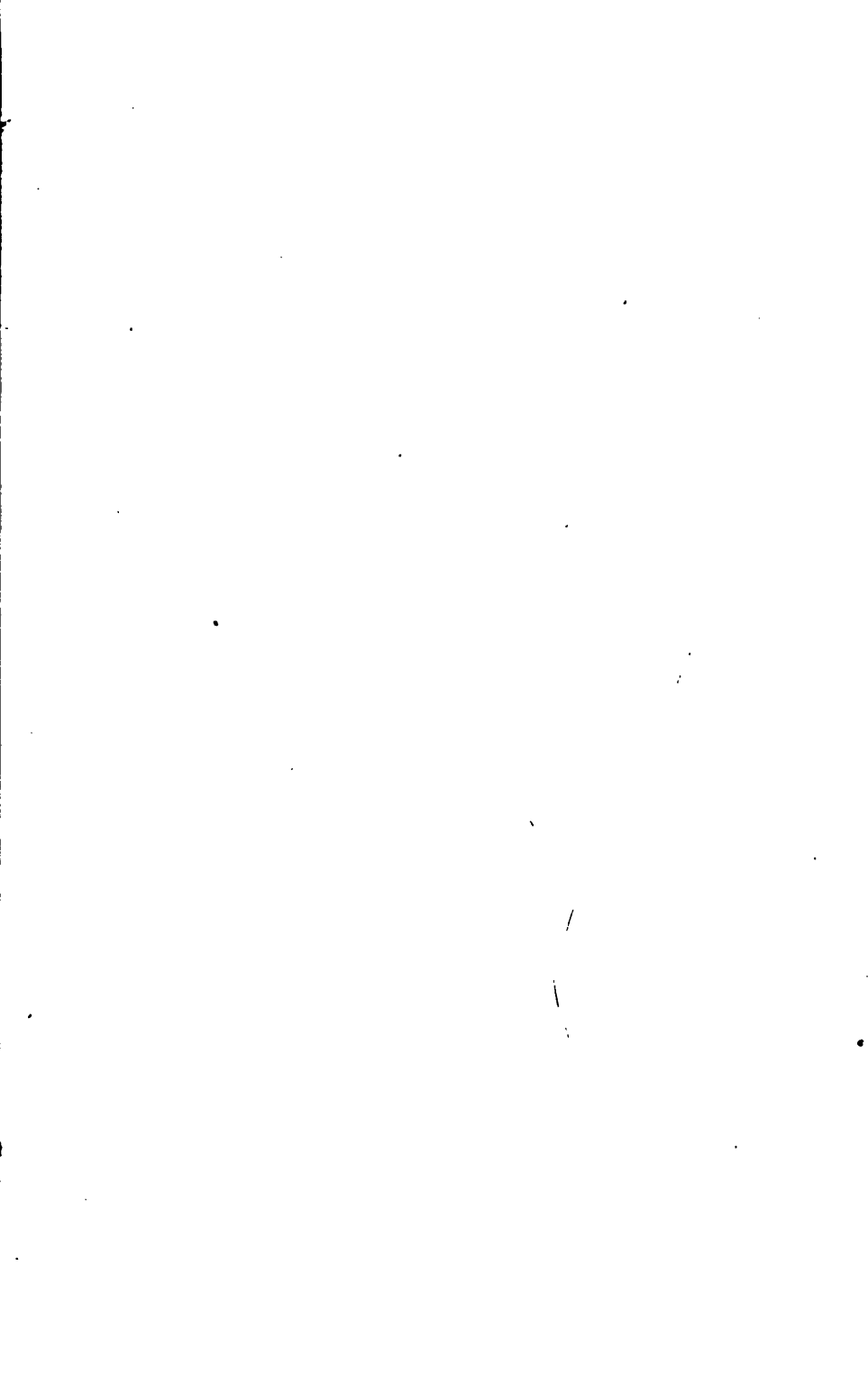
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